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# HANDGUNS



## MOD.2

SPRINGFIELD'S  
NEW XD MIGHT  
BE THE BEST YET

### FIRING LINE REPORTS

- COLT XSP
- REPUBLIC FORGE PATRIOT
- WALTHER PPQ M2 .22

THE CURVE  
TAURUS RESHAPES  
THE MODERN PISTOL

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RUGER BRINGS BACK  
THE POWERFUL .480

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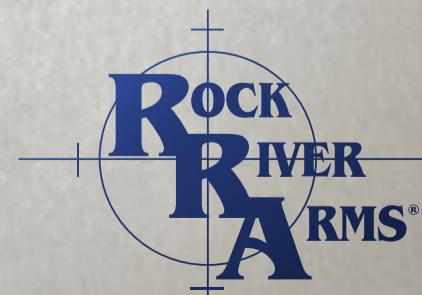
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## FEATURES

### 28 MOD SQUAD

By JAMES TARR

Springfield has tweaked its excellent XD platform to create the more concealable Mod.2.

### 38 RIMFIRE SHOOT-OUT

By BRAD FITZPATRICK

Six semiauto .22s go head to head on the range.

### ON THE COVERS

SPRINGFIELD  
XD MOD.2  
(Newsstand Edition)



28

TAURUS  
CURVE  
(Subscriber Edition)

Michael Anschuetz Photos



46

### 46 CURVE BALL

By JAMES TARR

The radical new Curve from Taurus takes pistol design to a whole new level.

### 54 BALANCE OF POWER

By JOSEPH VON BENEDIKT

The .480 Ruger cartridge, a nice blend of power and shootability, is back in the Super Redhawk.



38



54

### 60 DUCK AND COVER

By RICHARD NANCE

Learn what cover is and isn't—and how to make good use of it when you find it.



60

## DEPARTMENTS

### 6 LETTERS

### 8 SPEEDLOADS

- The Women of Glock
- 15 to the Third Drill
- Meet the .44-40

### 14 AMMO SHELF

PATRICK SWEENEY

Mexican ammo maker Aguila is turning out top-quality stuff.

### 16 DEFENSIVE TACTICS

WALT RAUCH

Learn why it's important to be able to shoot with one hand.

### 18 ON PATROL

DAVE SPAULDING

Today's weapon-mounted lights are an officer's best friend.

### 22 GUNS & GEAR

J. SCOTT RUPP

### 24 ESSENTIALS

JAMES TARR

Two holsters that take polymer rigs to the next level.

### 72 GUN SENSE

RICHARD NANCE

Defense against a gun grab.

## FIRING LINE REPORTS

### 64 REPUBLIC FORGE PATRIOT

By JAMES TARR

### 66 WALTHER PPQ M2 .22

By BRAD FITZPATRICK

### 68 COLT MUSTANG XSP

By NORMAN GRAY



HE THOUGHT  
I WOULDN'T BE PREPARED.  
THE DOT ON HIS CHEST  
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**3RD WEEK OF FEBRUARY**

Suppressors are the current rage in the shooting sports, with at least 40 states allowing ownership, and manufacturers are responding with multiple product options for rifles, pistols—and even shotguns! Learn everything you need to know about suppressors by watching this new segment, “Suppressors: Silence Is Golden.” Craig Boddington and Kyle Lamb team up to pass along their firearms knowledge—based on decades of experience in the field and at the range—in “Rifle Revolution.” Craig handles the bolt-action rifle category while Kyle addresses features on his favorite platform—the AR. 2015 marks the 30th anniversary of Beretta winning the M9 contract (and 100th anniversary of building semiauto pistols), and in this new segment (“Banking On Beretta’s M9/M92”), we call on a number of our and Beretta’s resident experts—ranging from military veterans to law enforcement to people involved in the rigorous testing of the M9—to file these special reports.

**4TH WEEK OF FEBRUARY**

The biggest and brawniet semiauto pistol made highlights this week’s show, with Magnum Research’s .50 AE Desert Eagle in the spotlight. Handgun Editor Patrick Sweeney offers his views on this behemoth, and while it doesn’t necessarily shake the ground you’re standing on when you pull the trigger, it lets you know you have a handful of pistol in your hands. Former special ops Tom Beckstrand offers personal perspective and interesting insight into an incredibly accurate load--Black Hills .308 Match-- and then we turn our attention on how to handle all the paperwork involved in purchasing/owning a suppressor.

**1ST WEEK OF MARCH**

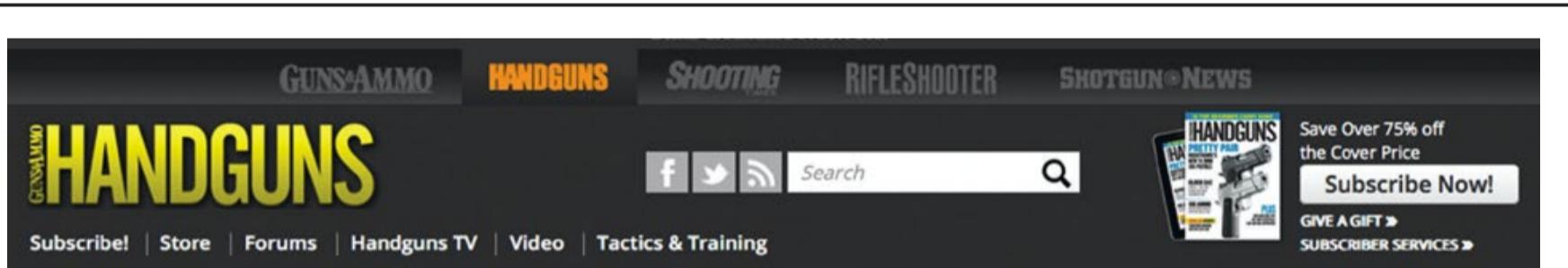
Amazingly (by today’s standards), when first introduced, suppressors were considered “mainstream” and could be shipped in the mail...and there’s a lot more interesting history to suppressors as we show an old Colt Woodsman .22 with original suppressor. Amazing and intriguing to say the least... We check out Stag Arms’ new 9mm carbine in our At The Range segment, along with S&W’s new M&P 9mm pistol and M&P-15 .223—with threaded barrels and suppressors. You’ll be amazed at the difference a suppressor makes. Finally, Boddington and Lamb talked about “enhanced triggers” in both and AR firearms and Beretta offers a behind-the-scenes report into the actual “torture” testing of the M9 leading up to Beretta winning the contract 30 years ago. (more)

**2ND WEEK OF MARCH**

From modern day firearms to historically significant models, we kick off this week’s show with SIG’s cutting edge Model 320 Conversion kit. It is an extra special package in terms of a striker-fired modular pistol platform, and we give it a run thru at the range. A recognized name from the past—from the World War II era—is back with a gun from the past as Inland Manufacturing reintroduces the M1 carbine it produced in the 1940s. It’s almost an exact reproduction of the original, and better yet, they’ve found a way to improve the accuracy of the little carbine, which is also available with a folding stock. Finally, we close out the show by accessing a sound meter to measure noise in this suppressed/unsuppressed segment. Your eyes (and ears) may be surprised by the results we uncover. And Craig Boddington and Kyle Lamb talks about transitioning from the Model 1911 to the M9 in our Banking On Beretta segment.

**3RD WEEK OF MARCH**

Ruger’s ever-popular GunSite/Scout rifle is chambered in a new caliber--.223—and even better news is that it is being offered with a threaded barrel so you can screw on a suppressor of your choice and fire away with considerably less report. Significant advancements in optics is Leupold’s long-standing reputation, and 2015 will be no different as it introduces its LCO. Curious what this optic has to offer? Tune in for this exclusive report. “Option overload” may be a term you’ve come to use when trying to decide which suppressor is best for you and a specific firearm. We jump right into the mix and sort out some of what’s available and potentially what some of the best options are for you, whether target shooting or hunting. You won’t want to miss this report.



The image shows the header of the Handguns magazine website. The top navigation bar includes links for GUNS&AMMO, HANDGUNS, SHOOTING, RIFLESHOOTER, and SHOTGUN NEWS. Below the navigation is a search bar and social media links for Facebook, Twitter, and RSS. A promotional banner on the right side offers a 75% discount on subscriptions and encourages users to "Subscribe Now!" and "Give a Gift". The main menu below the header includes links for Subscribe!, Store, Forums, Handguns TV, Video, and Tactics & Training.



## SHOULD YOU MODIFY YOUR CARRY GUN?

What's your stance on making modifications to carry guns?

[handgunsmag.com/carry-mods](http://handgunsmag.com/carry-mods)



## 5 MOST UNDERRATED HANDGUN CARTRIDGES

Which handgun rounds do you think deserve more popularity? Join the debate:

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AN INTERMEDIA OUTDOORS PUBLICATION  
WWW.HANDGUNS.COM

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**HANDGUNS** (ISSN # 1068-2635), April/May 2015, VOLUME 29 NUMBER 7. Published bimonthly by INTERMEDIA OUTDOORS, INC., 1040 6th Ave., 12th Floor, New York, NY 10018-3703. Periodical postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address change (Form 3579) to Handguns, P.O. Box 37539, Boone, IA 50037-0539. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: 500 R. 46 East, Clifton, NJ 07011. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 41405030.

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## Lovin' on the Nambu

The “Old School” article in the February/March issue caught my eye because I own a Nambu T14. The article was essentially correct as far as it goes, but a couple of points of clarification. The magazine is hard to remove due to a tension spring on the frontstrap. Why a combat pistol had such a device has been a source of speculation for decades. As far as being “somewhat unreliable,” I can only say that mine always goes bang when I pull the trigger and is pretty accurate

MARK D. PICKERILL  
MOSS LANDING, CA

I just received the latest issue and did enjoy the article on the Nambu, but I feel I must make a correction concerning the comparison between the Nambu round and the .32 ACP. The Nambu round should be compared to the .380, not the .32 because the bullet weights and velocities are closer. When I first started reloading this round, I had to make my own cases from .30/.32 Remington, but the Remington brass was too thick and the extractor wouldn’t snap over the

rim of the re-formed cases, which caused failures to extract.

I had the extractor on one of my Nambus modified to increase the space between the back of the extractor and the bolt face. After that it worked like a charm. My unmodified gun uses H.D.S. brass that’s an exact duplication of the factory cases. Extra power springs on both guns make for more reliable functioning.

DON L. SHARP  
LAKELAND, FL

## Revisiting 1917

A letter in the last issue basically says all U.S. Model 1917 revolvers had chambers with shoulders to stop and hold a .45 ACP cartridge against the blow of the firing pin. That statement is only about 84 percent correct (based on Colt’s production of 150,700 Model 1917s and S&W’s production of 163,476 Model 1917s).

Approximately the first 50,000 Colt Model 1917 revolvers had chambers bored straight through. Without the half-moon clips, the .45 ACP cartridges fall all the way to the front of the cylinder—a great nuisance if you don’t have any moon clips.

MARSHALL WILLIAMS  
BURLINGTON, WV

## Madness!

I like Dave Spaulding’s “Skills Drills” and often use them for my monthly shoots and classes. However, the “Mad Half Minute” (“Speed-

## CORRECTION

In a February/March “Speedloads” book review, I incorrectly identified *Handguns'* founding editor. Jan Libourel was the magazine's first editor. I apologize for the error.—JSR

loads,” February/March) has me scratching my head because I can’t get 11 rounds from the course of fire from either the text or the illustration. What am I missing?

KEN WAINWRIGHT  
FAIRVIEW PARK, OH

*Mr. Wainwright: You keep moving between the three stations until you’ve fired 11 shots.*—Dave Spaulding

## Full-Length Confusion

Just read the article “Bronze Beauty” (February/March), and I’m now confused about the utility of full-length guide rods in 1911 pistols. Until Mr. Sweeney’s remarks I wasn’t aware there are detractors. Front serrations can be a love or hate affair, but I hadn’t until now heard anyone complain about a full-length guide rod. So what gives?

KEVIN J. LAMBERT  
PLAINS, PA

*The issue comes down to disassembly and one-handed use. Disassembling one-piece rods requires a bent paperclip or other tool while two-piece rods can unscrew due to recoil. With a standard guide rod you can simply press the guide rod cap against a convenient corner to work the slide one-handed; a full-length rod prevents this.*

*The full-length rod can be useful in a competition gun—for extra weight or to mechanically locate a compensator during the slide cycle. But in a carry gun I don’t see a need for the full-length guide rod.*—Patrick Sweeney

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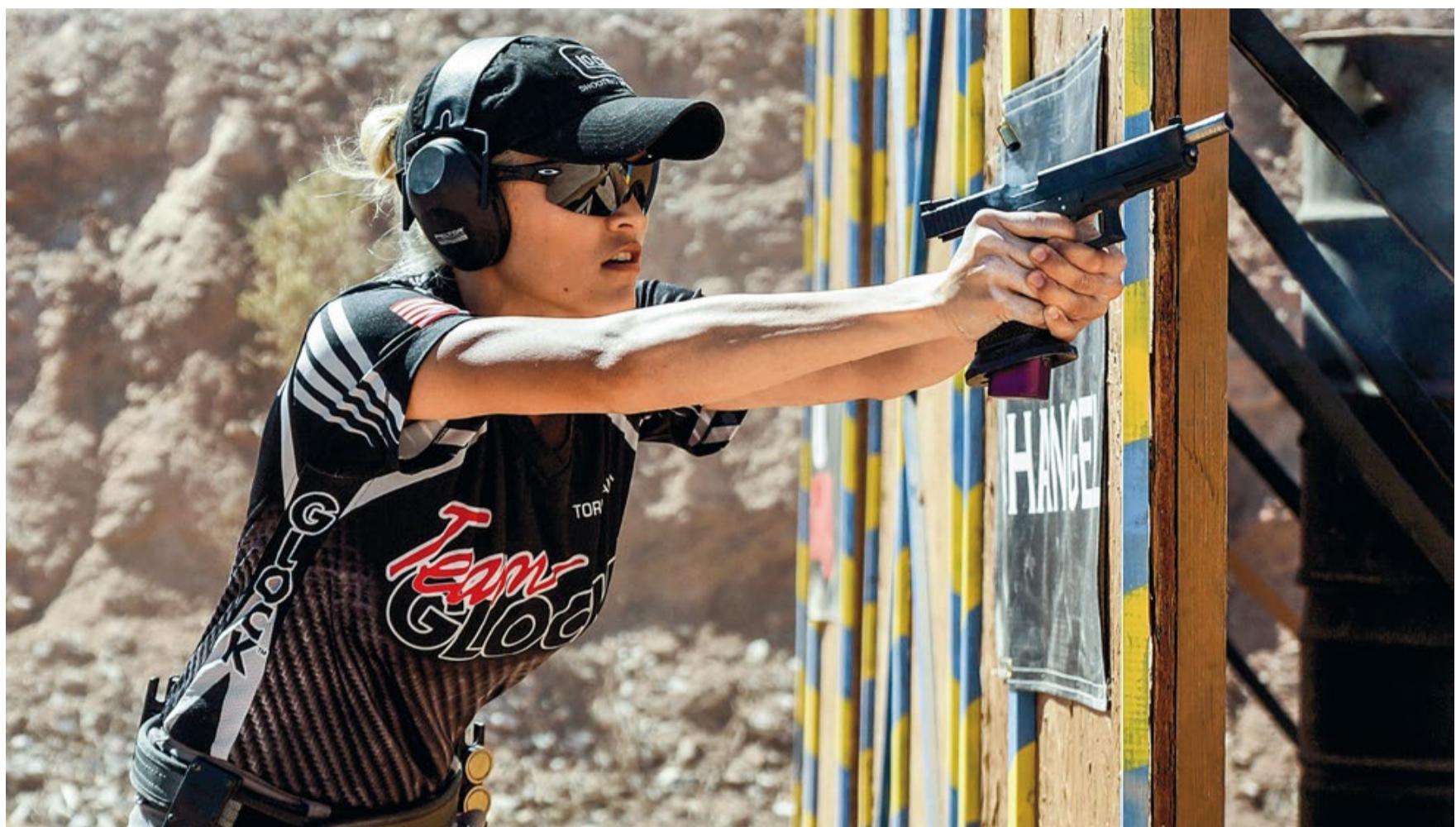
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# THE WOMEN OF GLOCK

## HOW TWO PROS GOT THEIR STARTS AND HOW THEY HANDLE THE LIFE.

By Megan Amselle

**TEAM GLOCK IS AN ELITE GROUP OF TOP** shooters who act as the company's ambassadors to the world of competitive shooting. Sponsored and equipped by Glock, they travel the world to showcase their skills at the national and international level. The team currently includes two women: Tori Nonaka and Michelle Viscusi.

Nonaka is a former child shooting prodigy, becoming the youngest person ever to win the USPSA national championships. She and her signature purple Glock now have a repeat gold medal from the IPSC World Shoot. Viscusi came to shooting as a result of her military and law enforcement service as an

MP in the Army National Guard and in the Border Patrol. Her shooting talent eventually earned her a spot on the History Channel's "Top Shot" competition.

Nonaka began target shooting with her family when she was just three years old, and what started as family fun turned serious by age 12 when she and her father started shooting competitively.

"I was able to hit what I was aiming at and always had a competitive drive in me, so practical shooting quickly became my passion," she said.

Viscusi, on the other hand, came into the shooting sports in a much different manner. She joined the

Army National Guard as an MP when she was 19 and found she had a natural affinity for shooting. She was still in the military when she auditioned for and won a spot on "Top Shot," which brings together shooters from the world of professional competition, law enforcement, the military and even self-taught amateurs in an elimination style competition involving all types of shooting, archery and even rock throwing.

"On the show I was competing head to head with 17 other more experienced shooters, and it was then I realized that to make my dream of becoming a professional shooter a reality, I would need to throw myself



**Tori Nonaka (opp. page) and Michelle Viscusi took very different paths to reach the shooting sports pinnacle.**

at my craft and start taking competitive shooting more seriously," said Viscusi.

Recently, with the birth of her daughter, Mila, this commitment became more of a challenge. "Late in my pregnancy I could no longer live-fire, so instead I set up targets around the house and trained by dry-firing as much as I could even if I was just sitting on the couch watching TV," she said.

"Once my baby girl was born I went back to the range to train for my last match of the year. Of course, my child requires a lot of my time, so I try my best to make it to matches at my home range."

Nonaka recently recalled one of her greatest moments on the range as she was struggling to repeat her 2013 championship performance as the Limited 10 ladies national title. "Going into the 2014 Limited National, I knew the challenge was to

win a second time, and I was shooting some crazy scores as my match went up and down because of how badly I wanted to win," she said.

"I would get nervous and make a mistake, and so on the next stage I would have to perform to make up for the mistake. I was making the win more difficult for myself, so I thought about all my training leading up to this moment and these four days of competition. Finally, on my last two rounds of the match I finished with a big smile knowing I had done it again. It was a moment of pure fun, and it made all the hard work worthwhile."

The world of competitive shooting encompasses many disciplines including IPSC, USPSA, IDPA, Steel Challenge and Glock Sport Shooting Foundation competition, which are all geared toward developing real-world defensive skills. But they're still games with rules,

unlike an actual gunfight. Based on her real-world experience in the military and in law enforcement, Viscusi believes IDPA is the best for honing defensive pistol skills.

"The rules and stages in IDPA have been simulated to simulate real-world self-defense scenarios. Overall, practical shooting is a sport that evolved from experimentation with handguns used for self-defense," she said.

There are few sports where men and women compete together. In collegiate sports, for example, men and women compete together only in skiing, fencing and shooting—and only in shooting do they directly compete against each other. Professional shooting competition is no different, and IDPA adds a physical element to the sport. Nonaka just views this as another challenge to conquer.

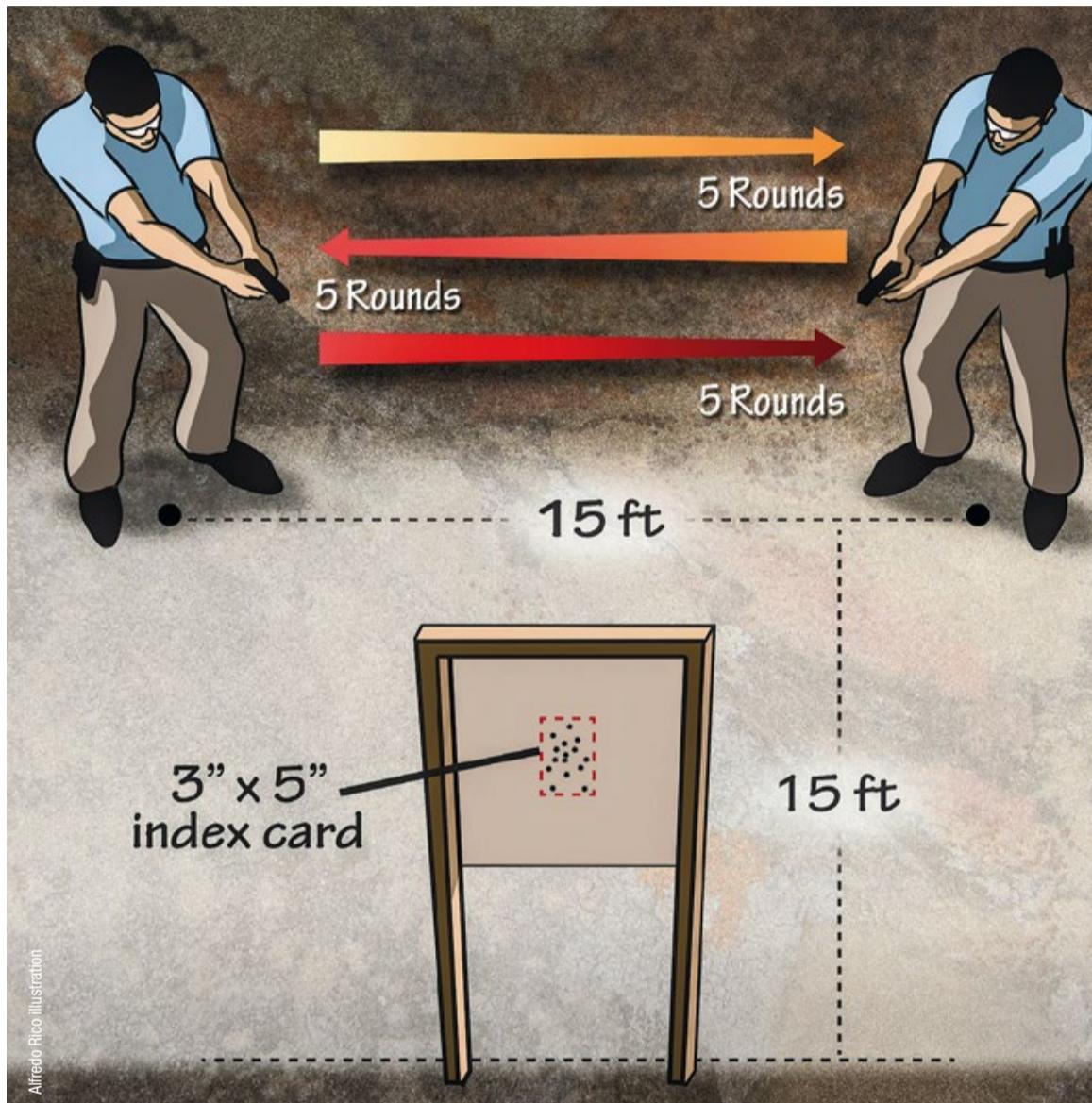
"I am very competitive, so winning High Lady does not satisfy me as good enough anymore," Nonaka said. "I am driven to be the best shooter I personally can be, so I put no limit on that. Men may have more strength in the physical aspects of the sport, and this a big reason I added working out to my training program. I treat my mind and body as a world-class athlete so that I perform at my highest and reach my potential."

"I encourage men and women with an interest in the shooting sports to get involved," Viscusi said. "Find a local range that has any type of competition and sign yourself up. Even if you're just starting, everyone has to start somewhere. Get out and practice as much as you can, and set goals for yourself each time you shoot a match. Videotape yourself and see what you need to improve for the next time you go out. And always remember to have fun."

## HANDGUNS | SPEEDLOADS

SKILLS DRILLS | BY DAVE SPAULDING

# 15 TO THE THIRD



**I CREATED THIS DRILL TO REINFORCE A** number of combat-related shooting skills. The combination of speed and accuracy is the key to combative shooting, and this drill combines it all.

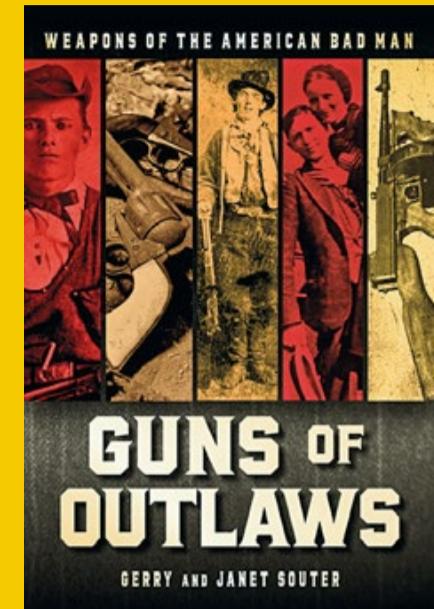
**GEAR** Standard equipment, shot timer, 15 rounds of ammo.

**DRILL** A target backer with 3x5 card attached is placed 15 feet from the shooter. The shooter establishes two firing positions 7.5 feet from the center for a 15-foot spread. The shooter can start from either the left or right position. On the beep, draw and fire five rounds into the 3x5 card, immediately move to the second position as quickly as possible and fire five rounds into the

target. Then move back to the original position, plant and shoot a final five rounds into the card. If your gun does not hold 15 rounds, reload while moving (gun does not have to be empty for the reload).

**SCORING** A perfect run is all 15 hits on the card in 11 seconds or less. If you are a young hot rod and have no difficulty with the aggressive lateral movements, lower to 10 seconds with all hits. A concealed draw can also be incorporated.

**GOAL** The ability to place multiple shots in vital areas, control recoil, move quickly and aggressively—but be able to stop, plant and shoot quickly—cannot be underestimated.



### Guns of Outlaws

By Gerry and Janet Souter  
hardcover, \$30

ZENITH PRESS; AVAILABLE THROUGH VARIOUS OUTLETS

Our fascination with lawbreakers—particularly those of the Old West and early parts of the 20th century—is still alive and well. *Guns of Outlaws* delves into that history dating to U.S. colonial times and proceeds to spin entertaining tales of outlaws, their exploits and their weapons.

Along the way we get a look at the handguns and long guns used by lawmen and also the citizens who took up arms to defend their towns. The authors' tales start all the way back in the early 19th century Natchez Trace in Tennessee, where the "Horrible Harpes" plied their trade of killing and robbing travelers—first with tomahawks and then with flintlocks. I had never heard of the Harpes boys, likewise Tiburcio Vasquez or the Reno gang, but the Souters move quickly into more familiar territory (for me, at least) with the James/Younger gang, the Dalton boys, Billy the Kid, John Wesley Hardin, Bonnie and Clyde, Pretty Boy Floyd and more.

The book is filled with black-and-white photos of crooks and lawmen and plenty of photographs (both black and white and color) of the guns themselves—period Colts, Smith & Wessons, Winchesters and others.

There's also a fair bit of firearms development history in the book, including a fascinating chapter on Hyman Lebman, who designed the 1911-based Lebman Baby, a .38 Super submachine gun favored by some early 20th century criminals.—JSR

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OLD SCHOOL | BY BOB SHELL

# .44-40

## THE .44 WCF, BETTER KNOWN AS THE

.44-40, was brought out in 1878 for the Colt single-action revolver. That was about five years after the Winchester '73 came out, and this handgun/rifle became a popular combo in .44-40. Of all the chamberings offered by Colt, it was the second most popular behind the .45 Colt. The Remington Model 1875 was also chambered to .44-40, but due to its late start it didn't sell as well as the Colt. It was, however, a superior gun because it was more accurate and had a stronger frame than the Colt. Merwin & Hulbert also manufactured revolvers in .44-40, many in break-open design.

Trappers, settlers and some hunters favored it, although it was on the light side for hunting—especially in a handgun—and many outlaws and peace officers carried one during their lifetimes. When Frank James surrendered, he had a pair of Remingtons in .44-40. Other well-known pistoleros included. 44-40 Wyatt Earp and Buffalo Bill. For years, the Border Patrol used it along the southern border, and it came into play in many gunfights.

The cartridge closely resembles the .44 Magnum, but they're not



**A** Replica revolvers in .44-40 are quite popular thanks to the sport of Cowboy Action shooting. Both of these guns are made by Uberti: The double action (top) is a Schofield, and the single action is a Smoke Wagon.

interchangeable. The older .44-40 has a slight bottleneck, and the bullet diameter typically runs between .427 and .428 and weighs 200 grains. At one time Winchester made a high-performance round that produced 1,800 fps in a rifle, but that load should never be fired in a handgun. The typical load in a handgun produces from 700 to 900 fps, depending on load and barrel length. The neck area has thin brass, which may cause a problem

with some handloaders. Components are available with Starline producing the brass.

Today there are several companies that make replica guns in .44-40, and most of these guns are focused on the Cowboy Action market. If you've never shot Cowboy Action, it's a great way to get started in the shooting sports. But even if that's not your thing, the .44-40 is a great cartridge to shoot just for the fun of it.



## GALCO DUAL ACTION OUTDOORSMAN

When a recent filming session of "Ruger Inside & Out," which I co-host, called for a javelina hunt with a 5.5-inch Redhawk, I searched for a suitable holster and discovered the DAO (\$95, [GALCOGUNLEATHER.COM](http://GALCOGUNLEATHER.COM)). It's a gorgeous leather rig that can be worn strong-side or cross-draw, and it fit the revolver perfectly right from the start. It features a tension screw and also a polymer reinforcement tab on the thumb break to make snapping and unsnapping the break easy—even with gloves. The belt slots accommodated my 1.75-inch heavy gun belt just fine, and they positioned the revolver just right. Heck, I'm thinking about buying the Redhawk just so I have a reason to buy the holster as well.—JSR

# At One with the Gun



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# THE AGUILA ADVANTAGE

## AMMO FROM SOUTH OF THE BORDER—AND AS GOOD AS ANY YOU'LL FIND.

### IMPORTED AMMUNITION, ESPECIALLY

the cheap stuff, tends to have a spotty reputation. And you don't want to waste your time or money practicing with ammo that will force you to work on your malfunction drills because it is unreliable or is so inaccurate you are left wondering whether your misses on targets and steel are you, the gun or the ammo.

But imported ammo can be good as well, and that is certainly the case with Aguila. Made in Mexico, Aguila is more than you might think. Your first thought is, "Oh, made in Mexico, so it's cheap blasting ammo." Wrong.

Aguila recognized some time ago that if it wanted to get shelf space alongside the better-known ammo brands here in the United States it couldn't be just as good as the others; it had to be better. So the company bit the bullet, so to speak, and invested in people, machinery and plant improvements and processes.

I was recently down in Mexico visiting Aguila, and I was impressed. I've been to a lot of manufacturing facilities—ammo, guns and more—and what I saw south of the border was as clean, well organized and up to date as any I've visited of late. It had the full complement of delicate measuring equipment, accuracy-testing gear and pressure-testing barrels and receivers. And the employees? All hard at work, undertak-



**▲ If Aguila's 124-grain full metal jacket is any indication, this Mexican import offers shooters a new and competitively priced option for general shooting, competition and defense.**

ing labor-intensive tasks alongside the labor-saving machines. All the ammo was hand inspected multiple times and then hand packed.

While at the Aguila plant, I had a chance to test all of its 9mm offerings: 115-grain full metal jacket, 124-grain full metal jacket and 117-grain jacketed hollowpoint rounds. They all worked, in various handguns, submachine guns and even a semiauto Mendoza carbine—a rarity usually seen, if at all, in museums.

Here at home, the only loading that could be had in volume in time to make this issue was the 124-grain FMJ. I dumped a box of the ammo on the bench and closely inspected

each round. All were clean, unmarred and unstained. All the bullets appeared to have been seated straight, and none had obviously wobbly noses when I rolled them across the surface. The primers were smooth, unmarred and evenly seated to just below the case head. The cases had a firm, uniform cannelure beneath the bullet base to prevent bullet setback on feeding.

I dropped each one in a Wilson case/cartridge gauge. Each went in smoothly and to the correct depth, and they fell out under their own weight. I pulled a bullet and weighed it: 124.1 grains. The powder was a small amount of a ball-like powder, and the case was a boxer-primed.

Naturally, I wanted to test the ammo in an accurate pistol, so I chose my Nighthawk T3 in 9mm—a tightly fitted pistol with a match barrel half an inch longer than normal for suppressor use. It has proven to be a tack-driver, and if there is anything the least bit "off" in ammo,

### PERFORMANCE RESULTS | AQUILA AMMUNITION

9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
full metal jacket	124	1,095	14.9	2.25

**Notes:** Test platform was a Nighthawk T3 with a 5.5-inch barrel. Accuracy result is the average of five five-shot groups from a Sinclair rest at 25 yards. Velocities are the average of 10 rounds measured with PACT MK IV chronograph 15 feet from the muzzle.

a tight, accurate pistol is usually the best means of uncovering it.

Aguila's 9mm 124-grain FMJ is quite soft in recoil. The book spec on it lists the expected velocity as 1,115 fps. My chronograph measured it at 1,095 fps. Yes, the extra half-inch of the Nighthawk barrel should have boosted the velocity just a bit, but the day I tested the load the temperature was only 37 degrees, with high humidity, so the results I saw were certainly close enough to spec.

What really got my attention was the accuracy. The Aguila delivered groups I associate with match ammo—either the expensive stuff from factories or the personal stuff I have slaved over. For vanilla-plain ball to be delivering two-inch groups over a rest is pretty impressive.

And to do so with a recoil level that makes it attractive for competition shooting is a bonus.

USPSA Production and IDPA Stock Service Pistol divisions have a minimum power factor of 125 (bullet weight times velocity, drop the last three digits). A 124-grain bullet at 1,095 produces a PF of 135, which is a comfortable cushion above the minimum and nice to have in case you run into a slow chrono or have a slow barrel. Its accuracy makes it even more attractive for the action pistol shooter. Further, the 124-grain FMJ burns quite cleanly, so once you've used your Aguila ammo, the boxer-primed cases will be a breeze to reload.

The 117-grain jacketed hollow-point has a listed velocity of 1,250 fps, and when I can get some of this

particular load, I'm going to test it in ballistic gelatin to see if Aguila has made a barrier-blind jacketed hollowpoint. If it did half as much work on making the 117-grainer expand as it did in making the 124-grainer accurate, then it should pass with flying colors.

And the cost? A quick price check on the 124-grain load I tested came up at the same cost as more familiar brands. So you get soft recoiling, clean-burning, accurate ammo at a competitive cost. You get reloadable cases.

And you get all of this from a new source. Competition among ammunition makers for our hard-earned dollars improves quality while bringing prices down, and we're the winners. I'm rooting for Aguila to do well because then we all will. ◎



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# ONE AND DONE?

## IF YOU CAN'T SHOOT ONE-HANDED, YOU'RE PUTTING YOURSELF AT RISK.

### BEING ABLE TO FIRE YOUR DEFENSIVE

handgun one-handed is a critical skill. Yes, using both hands gives you consistently better first and subsequent hits because you have better recoil control. As a bonus, a two-handed hold permits using more powerful defensive ammunition. However, it's important to remember you may not have the use of both hands in a confrontation.

It might be because a temporary or permanent physical handicap prevents you from using both hands to fire a gun or because you're in a space where your movements are restricted to the point you can use only one hand—such as in a vehicle, where tight spaces and impediments like seat belts can prevent a two-handed firing grip. And in the worst possible scenario, albeit a quite likely one, an attacker or attackers prevents you from using both hands, either by restricting them or injuring them.

And consider a situation in your own home where you've been awakened by a noise and investigate. You grab your handgun and flashlight or turn on some lights, trying to find out where everyone is. You call 911 and operate a home alarm system if you have one. You'll do all these actions while holding a gun, and if you're confronted during any of these activities, you'll have to shoot one-handed.

Think about it: There are few times when both of your hands will be unencumbered or you will be able to drop what's in one hand to use two hands on the gun.

Or you may not want to (or instinctively be able to) drop what's in one hand in order to draw and fire your handgun. Back when I was in law enforcement, I saw fellow investigators



**A** Restrainted spaces, occupied hands, injuries and physical limitations can prevent you from shooting with two hands. That's why one-handed shooting is such a critical skill to learn.

refuse to drop their investigative files while trying to make what had turned into a non-compliant arrest.

If an armed individual is startled by a close-range threat, I think the most common reaction is to draw and point the gun, one-handed, at the threat. Don't believe me? I spent many hours observing and running force-on-force training, where both students and role players, armed with Simunitions gear, did exactly this. All were accomplished in handgun use and tactical training, and they immediately pointed the gun one-handed.

### Training

To learn one-handed shooting, I suggest you begin with a target directly in front of you and no more than five feet away. As the hits get good (and they will quickly), incrementally increase your target distance out to no more than 15 feet.

When you're satisfied with your hits, start over using your less-dominant hand. In a crisis situation, your dominant hand may well be incapacitated or busy doing other things.

Most important here is to use a large and preferably humanoid-appearing target. You're learning a skill: shooting with one hand. You're not looking for pinpoint hits. Any hit within the vital zone should be considered more than adequate. Don't confuse this by adding a desire to put a bunch of holes close together.

Be sure to bring your gun up high enough you can align it to where you want to hit. What you're doing here is not point shooting, with the gun in close. That is a different skill to be learned separately.

Your focus is on the target, not on having a classic sight picture. I've found if you can see the gun at all, you'll get decent hits. The most critical skill is being able to smoothly pull the trigger so the gun's muzzle is not pulled off the target.

For further reading on one-handed shooting, I suggest *Kill or Get Killed* by Rex Applegate, *Secrets of a Master Gunfighter* by Jim Cirillo and *Shooting to Live* by Capt. William Ewart Fairbairn and Capt. Eric Anthony Sykes.



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# LIGHT 'EM UP

## MODERN WEAPON-MOUNTED LIGHTS CAN BE AN OFFICER'S BEST FRIEND.

### THE MAJORITY OF TIME I SPENT ON

patrol was the night shift. Before I had school-aged children, I liked the freedom of being a night owl and sleeping in the next morning. My wife was the same way, so working the four p.m. to midnight shift fit our lives perfectly. So I spent a lot of time working in the dark. Back then, flashlights were the size of tailpipes and just as likely to be used as an impact weapon as a lighting device.

Today the use of a flashlight as an impact weapon is not permitted, and carrying a large flashlight is quite uncommon if not impractical. It's certainly not necessary because light technology has advanced to the point where flashing a light in someone's eyes can be disabling by itself. Today I have a light the size of a lipstick tube, and it offers more white light power than the one I once carried that was powered by five D-cell batteries.

The next move was to mount lights on guns, and as far back as the late 1970s officers were coming up with ways of affixing lights to various long guns. Handguns came next. In the late 1990s, I commanded a multi-jurisdictional drug task force that conducted its own raids and forced entries, something we were doing several times a week at one point. Heckler and Koch had introduced its USP Compact pistol, which was capable of temporarily attaching a white light to the frame. This allowed investigators to carry the gun "slick" while concealed but mount the white light when conducting a forced entry.

Admittedly, one of my concerns with the new weapon system was officers using the gun/light combination as a lighting device and not



These days the weapon-mounted light is considered an everyday and indispensable tool for law enforcement. There are many to choose from; the key is to use them correctly.

treating it as a weapon, and I did see a few of them looking through drawers and closets for evidence with the gun as a light—a transgression I addressed.

Today the pistol-mounted light is common not just for tactical teams but on patrol as well, and I admit to being originally concerned about this as well. Talking with trainers, commanders and street cops across the country, it appears my concerns were unfounded because officers understand the proper use of the weapon-mounted light.

Law enforcement trainers are doing a great job of explaining the weapon-mounted light as a supplement to the handheld light and not a replacement. The handheld light can be pointed in directions the weapon-mounted light should not, but when a serious threat arises, the weapon-mounted light allows both hands to be placed on the handgun for greater

accuracy, enhanced incapacitation potential and reduced liability. It seems the weapon-mounted light is as common as handcuffs and is being used in a tactically sound fashion.

The pistol-mounted light is better than ever, offering greater power, reduced size and weight and enhanced ergonomics. Some of these lights also come with laser sighting devices, which some will like and some will not. The choice is up to you.

One of my favorite lights is the Surefire X300, which has gone through several versions over the years. The current one is powerful and versatile and features a high-performance LED generating 500 lumens of white light focused by a Total Internal Reflection lens to produce a tight beam with long reach and significant surround light for peripheral vision.

The light emitting diode or LED is far superior in toughness to the

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\* Some pistols may not be available in all states and locales due to laws limiting magazine capacity and feature-based restrictions. Please check with your local law enforcement agency prior to purchasing this firearm to verify that it may legally be purchased and/or possessed in your particular state and locale.

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## HANDGUNS | ON PATROL

→ traditional light bulb and is now standard on all tactical-grade lights. The super-tough aerospace aluminum body is hard anodized and is sealed with a rubber O-ring and gasket to make it weatherproof. The X300 Ultra can be attached to a pistol or a long gun since its Rail-Lock system permits rapid attachment to either universal or Picatinny rails. Its integral ambidextrous push/toggle switch provides one-finger operation for either momentary or constant on/off operation.

If you prefer a light/laser combination, the Insight Technology WL1-AA is hard to beat. The WL1-AA is the first tactical weapon light to offer powerful performance on readily available AA batteries. Its new Quick Release Rail-Grabber mount provides fast and solid attachment while keeping a low profile. I have been using this light for well over a year and have found it to be compact, rugged and dependable.

Insight Technology engineers took the same approach in the development of the WL1-AA as they did in designing aiming and illumination devices for the U.S. military and Special Operations Forces, combining decades of experience to the re-

### ALL LIGHT IS NOT EQUAL

When selecting a white light, think more than just the number of lumens. Think about how the hand interacts with the light, how easily the light goes on and off the gun and about the beam itself.

Beams often have a bright center, where the lumen level will be measured. I prefer a wider beam to get the greatest field of view while looking for additional threats. A light I tested a few months back had such a bright hot spot in the middle of the beam it was actually distracting. My eyes were pulled to the center of the beam, which is not good when the eyes need to scan as widely as possible for threats.—DS

quests of high-risk military and law enforcement professionals. These operators asked for high light output from commonly available and inexpensive AA batteries, which can be found in many locations in the field.

The WL1-AA uses two AA batteries to produce 150+ lumens for up to 90 minutes from the durable LED. Officers and agencies using their lights on multiple weapons have noticed inconsistencies in rail sizes caused fit problems. The Quick Release Rail-Grabber mount allows for a rock solid fit on MIL-STD 1913 and many other rails.

A new player on the weapon light scene is Inforce, and it is doing some great things, especially in the area of ergonomics. The Inforce LED Auto Pistol Light produces 200 lumens of white light with a tight beam for close- to mid-range applications and balanced peripheral light for scanning of the surrounding area. The bilateral and ambidextrous paddle switching system allows left- or right-hand activation and natural finger/thumb movement from the weapon grip frame to the switch.

The APL's integrated mounting system is compact, convenient and securely attaches without tools to almost any common pistol rail system. I really like how the support-side thumb, whether right or left hand, easily engages the paddle switch. I shoot with a thumb-forward grip, as do many pistol shooters these days, and this thumb hovers just above the paddle—making activation as easy as lowering the thumb.

The lights listed here are just a small sampling of what is available, so give critical thought to your selection and choose wisely based on your real world of work. All of the lights mentioned here were obtained from Brownells, a great one-stop shop for law enforcement shooting gear that also offers discounts to active-duty officers.



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## HANDGUNS | GUNS & GEAR | By J. SCOTT RUPP



### < FNH USA FNS COMPACTS

The company's striker-fired pistol is now available in a compact version, with a 3.6-inch cold-hammer-forged barrel and a new larger dot on the front sight. Overall length is 6.7 inches; weight is just 23.4 ounces. The slide stop and mag release are fully ambidextrous, and the pistol can be had with or without a manual safety (also ambi). Options include matte black or matte silver finish and three-dot or night three-dot sights—both of which are fixed—and it's available in 9mm or .40. The 9 ships with two 12-round and one 17-round magazines; the .40 comes with two 10-rounders and one 14-roulder.

[{\\$599, FNHUSA.COM}](#)

### > HORNADY AMERICAN GUNNER

The handgun side of this new line features the excellent XTP bullet in popular weights for common defensive chamberings—at a very attractive price. The lineup includes .380 (90 grain), 9mm (115, 124 +P), .357 (125), .38 Special (125), .40 S&W (180) and .45 ACP (185). Suggested retail is \$22 per box—25 rounds in a box except for .40 and .45, which are 20—and of course you're likely to find it a lot cheaper at various ammo outlets.

[{HORNADY.COM}](#)



### > SNEAKY PETE ARSENAL

An alternative to carrying multiple spare magazines or speedloaders, the Arsenal puts a whopping 50 rounds of ammunition at your fingertips. Simply remove the case from your belt, open the magnetic flap and slide out the plastic tray. Available in .380, 9mm and .45 ACP in black leather or ballistic nylon.

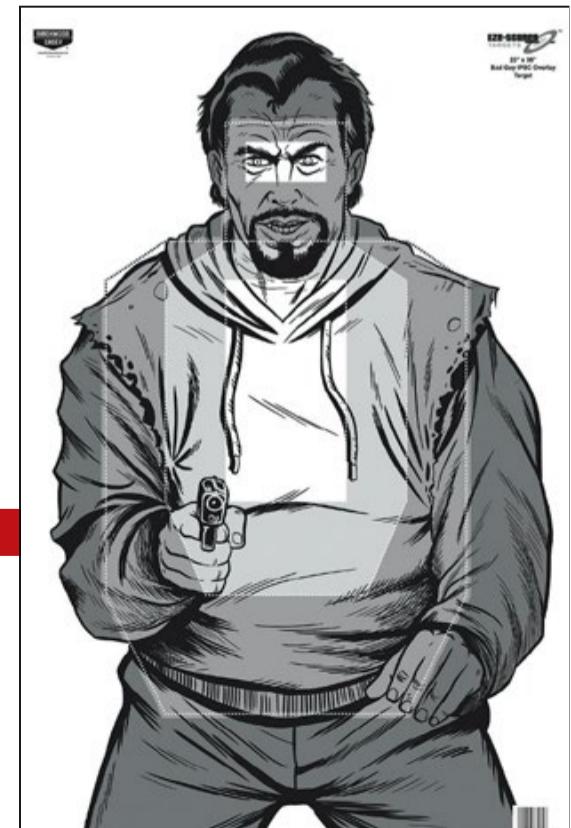
[{\\$25, SNEAKYPETE.COM}](#)



### V VIRIDIAN GREEN LASER/HOLSTER FOR GLOCK

The original green laser folks now have a Glock fit for their Reactor 5, the Glock 26/27. Better yet, the new laser/holster combo will also fit Gen 3 and 4 models 19, 23, 32, 33, 35, 38 and 39. The holster is the company's ECR, which offers an instant on/off feature: Draw the pistol and the laser comes on automatically; holster and the laser turns off.

[{\\$239, VIRIDIANGREENLASER.COM}](#)



### > BIRCHWOOD CASEY EZE-SCORER

This is a great paper target series, and new are 23x25-inch offerings in a variety of formats—from bullseye styles to competition targets to realistic versions. One that caught my eye right away was the BC Bad Guy black-and-white overlay (shown). It's a neat combination of realism, which aids defensive training, along with an overlay corresponding not only to vital zones but to IPSC-style scoring. Cool. You can see the rest at the company's website.

[{\\$7 per five targets or \\$1 each for multiples of 100 targets; BIRCHWOODCASEY.COM}](#)

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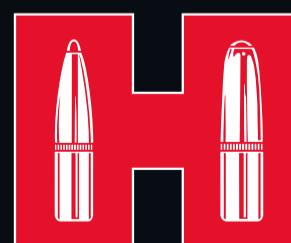
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# UPPER CRUST

## TWO NEW HOLSTERS THAT BRING SOME LUXURY TO POLYMER DESIGNS.

### WHILE POLYMER HOLSTERS WERE AT

first all the rage due to precise fit and durability, a simple plastic sheath designed to fit a gun isn't enough for some consumers anymore. With advancements in polymers and manufacturing, many companies are now producing polymer holsters with extra features beyond simple tension or locking devices. For lack of a better term, I'll call these luxury polymer holsters, and there are some great ones on the market today.

The first is the Safariland GLS (Grip Lock System). There are several different variations of GLS holsters, the only difference being the type of belt attachment provided with the holster—either belt loop, paddle or belt clip. If you don't like the type of belt attachment you chose, spare paddles/belt loops are available. They are easily switched using a screwdriver and an Allen wrench.

Officially the GLS is constructed of Safarilamine, which is a dense, tough polymer with a matte finish. The material used in the belt loops and paddles, however, has much more flex to it. This is the ideal combination. Having broken more than my share of polymer holsters and belt loops over the years by sitting on them in a car for hours on end during surveillances, I can attest that the Safariland is built to last years. I don't think I could break it with a hammer.

The holster with paddle attachment has a slight forward cant to it, but the belt loop can be adjusted for cant—from straight vertical to a forward FBI rake. The holster itself has an open bottom. Holster



▲ Wilson's Tactical Assault Kydex holster has a pebbled exterior and a lining to protect the gun's finish. It features tension-screw adjustment.

tension can be adjusted through the use of a provided Allen wrench on a silver hex head screw in the holster body.

The GLS is a security holster, one using a smooth tab that contacts the user's middle finger. As you obtain a firm firing grip on the gun, the tab moves forward toward the trigger guard and unlocks. The tab needs to be moved less than a quarter-inch to unlock the pistol, and deactivating it happens automatically as part of obtaining a proper grip on the pistol during the draw stroke.

It requires no additional training, unlike the Blackhawk Serpa; if you've got a proper grip on the gun, your middle finger has already deactivated the GLS. It's that simple.

So where's the "luxury"? Well, in addition to the excellent polymer used in the construction of the holster shell and the tension screw to customize it to your specific pistol, the interior of the holster is lined

with gray suede to protect the gun's finish. Polymer holsters are great in that they don't stretch, but they can scratch the finish of most handguns. There are hard points of contact no matter what brand of gun you carry, and over time and with practice draws, polymer will put marks on your pistol. With a suede lining the wear will be reduced to nearly zero.

Yes, eventually the suede will wear out, but it will take years and thousands of draws. And then you should just buy a new holster because suggested retail on the GLS is a mere \$47, which is much cheaper than I was expecting for what this is. As of right now it is available for most Glocks and Smith & Wesson M&Ps as well as Springfield Armory's XD variants.

If you must have a Level 1 security holster, I consider the Safariland GLS the standard against which all others should now be judged. →



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## HANDGUNS | ESSENTIALS

The second “luxury” holster to come to my attention is the Tactical Assault from Wilson Combat. This is an open-top outside-the-waistband belt holster, and while it is an excellent product, I really

think it is misnamed because “tactical assault holster” sounds like some sort of thigh rig SAS operators wear while responding to a terrorist incident.

The Wilson is a polymer holster

with a textured exterior, and it almost looks like it is made of finely grained cowhide. It's the nicest looking polymer holster I've ever seen, and my girlfriend could not tell that it wasn't made of premium

### LaserLyte Hi-Point TGL

My FFL is a rather large gun store in the metro Detroit area, and it sells most brands of firearms. Because it has both an indoor pistol and rifle range, the staff there sees every type of firearm. And one brand of pistols the employees frequently sees on the range is Hi-Point.

A lot of gun owners look down their noses at Hi-Points, but they sell by the truckload for some good reasons. They are inexpensive, and they are straight blowback designs, which means they are reliable. LaserLyte now offers a trigger guard laser to fit all models of Hi-Point pistols ever made, from .380 to .45 ACP.

This red laser has push-button activation on the side and offers constant on as well as a pulse. Weight is less than three-quarters of an ounce, and battery life is five hours (the unit has an auto-shutoff feature after six minutes). The unit does not require removal to change batteries.

I happened to have both a 9mm and .45 ACP Hi-Point on hand when the laser showed up on my doorstep, and I installed it on the 9mm first. At 10 yards the laser dot was only four inches left and two high off the sights, which meant zeroing it was quick and easy.

No matter the caliber, all Hi-Point pistols have the same shape trigger guard. The profile of the slide where it meets the top of the trigger guard, however, is different in the .45 ACP. To make the Hi-Point laser a truly “one size fits all” product, LaserLyte includes a second housing to fit the .45 pistol. The control module inside the housing that contains the laser can be switched between housings or even between pistols with only a few minutes' work. The laser comes with batteries already installed, as well as a spare set of batteries. Suggested retail is \$105.—JT



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leather until she tapped it with her fingernail. Officially the exterior is .080-inch pebble-finish Kydex.

It's not just the texturing on the polymer that makes the holster look like a nice leather holster; it is the stitching that runs around the



Safariland's GLS features both an auto-locking tab that's easy to operate and a suede lining. It's available in either paddle or belt-loop styles.

edges. This stitching holds the black suede lining in place. There is a tension screw below the trigger guard to adjust the fit to your gun. It is an open-bottom holster with a generous sight track for the front sight.

The belt loop attachment has just the right amount of give to it, and it is made of two pieces of leather stitched to a polymer core. The belt loop slots are 1.5 inches wide and the holster has a slight forward cant.

Bill Wilson has been working closely with well-known trainer and professional shooter Ernest Langdon in recent years, and the Tactical Assault reminds me of one of the holsters Langdon designed a few years ago. While the holster is approved for use in IDPA, as OWB holsters go it tucks the pistol in close to the body.

Both the Safariland and Wilson are OWB holsters and as such are not as low profile as inside-the-waistband models, but that doesn't mean they aren't suitable for concealed carry.

With any holster you will have to dress around it if you want it to remain properly concealed, and this goes double for OWB models. But it is possible. I carry a full-size auto in an OWB holster every day.

I like the Wilson Tactical Assault holster so much I would make it my daily carry unit, if only there were models available for my carry guns. Right now it is available for full-size and compact 1911 pistols; Smith & Wesson M&Ps in .22, 9mm, .40 and .45; Glock 19 and 17; and the Beretta 92/96, in right- and left-hand models. It retails for a surprisingly low \$70. ◎

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# MOD SQUAD

BY JAMES TARR

## SPRINGFIELD'S NEW XD MOD.2 TAKES THE ICONIC DESIGN TO THE NEXT LEVEL.

The concealed carry movement in this country is currently at its historical peak. I recently did some research and found that there are now over 450,000 Concealed Pistol License holders in Michigan alone, and my Michigan CPL is good in 39 states. Even Illinois has been forced to get with the program, and I've seen with my own eyes the no-longer-mythical Illinois CCW. There is no one database to check, but it is estimated there are now between 10 million to 20 million CCW holders in the U.S. That's a lot of potential customers.

Most people who decide to start carrying a gun—and continue to do so—gravitate toward smaller, lighter handguns. It's just human nature because they are easier to conceal

and more convenient to carry. Just two years ago Springfield Armory introduced the XDS subcompact, and it was a huge hit. The only complaint many people had with the single-column pistol was it didn't hold enough rounds. They wanted a new, higher-capacity, slim-line XD. Enter the brand-new Springfield Armory XD Mod.2 Sub-Compact.

For those of you who need a refresher on the XD line, it's a polymer-frame, striker-fired pistol made in Croatia and imported by Springfield Armory. It has an ambidextrous magazine release and is fed by stainless steel magazines. It's been a steady seller, and you'd be wrong if you thought the newer XD(M) had replaced it.

The new XD Mod.2 is a new custom compact version of the original design, offered in both 9mm and .40 S&W. They are available in all-black or two-tone finishes, and the two caliber versions are pretty much indistinguishable except for

the hole at the end of the barrel. Barrel length is three inches, and you might think the Mod.2 looks a lot like a standard XD 3-inch Sub-Compact—until you put the two side by side.

Immediately noticeable is the fact that the XD Mod.2 has the same sights people came to love on the XDS: a red fiber-optic insert in the front and a no-snag rear with two white dots.

Some people are probably wondering why Springfield didn't just make a double-column XDS, which has a much slimmer slide than either the XD or XD(M) and conceals better. Well, the XDS uses a single-column magazine while other XD models—including the Mod.2—use a double-column magazine and correspondingly wider frame and grip. If you made the XDS frame wide enough to accommodate a double-stack mag, its skinny slide would not only look goofy, it's probably a nightmarish engineering job.

That's not to say the XD Mod.2 sports a standard XD slide. The slide of this pistol has been narrowed along the top, and it widens only at the bottom to mate with the frame. This restyling of the slide is especially noticeable at the rear. The slide is a bit cut-out around the new serrations, which are slanted and flat-bottomed. Springfield calls them Posi-Wedge serrations. They are functional, and I like the looks of the new slide. →



◀ Meet the new Grip Zone. Zone 1 is the area around the grip safety; Zone 2 is on the front; and Zone 3 is the nearly smooth area on the side. Tarr reports he doesn't see much difference in texture between the zones, but the overall effect is excellent in terms of control.

## MOD SQUAD

I would be remiss if I didn't point out this isn't just a standard XD grip that has been textured. The frame has been narrowed to improve concealability. The beavertail has been contoured upward for slightly higher hand positioning.

The trigger guard has been undercut in what Springfield is calling its High-Hand grip relief. The higher you can get your hand on the gun the easier it is to manage recoil. Frame contouring aside, what most people will notice is what looks like gunsmith hand-stippling to much of the gripping area of the frame. Meet the Grip Zone.

Modern manufacturing techniques are allowing gun makers to put textures on polymer through simple injection molding that were previously possible only through hand stippling. What you get with the XD Mod.2 is exactly that. The front and rear of the frame now have specially molded textures to help keep your hand in place during recoil.

The Zone 1 texture runs along the front of the frame and down the spine of the backstrap. It is the most aggressively textured, although to be honest I thought it was close in look and slip resistance to the Zone 2 texturing. The Zone 2 covers the

rest of the finger-groove area and the backstrap. What Springfield calls Zone 3 is the much smoother texture covering the rest of the frame. The end result is a grip providing excellent control while not being so aggressive it pills your clothing.

To me, the great thing about this new texturing is it shows Springfield Armory is paying attention to its customers, listening to their comments and watching how they customize their own pistols. While I consider the narrowing of the slide to be little more than aesthetics, the new contours and texturing to the frame are purely functional and a definite improvement.

Springfield everywhere (in print, on their website, etc.) is referring to this model as the XD Mod.2 Sub-Compact, but the stickers on the boxes list them as the XDG (presumably for XD Grip Zone). Personally I think XDG rolls off the tongue better, but then again, my family wouldn't even let me name our dog.

I consider the new XD Mod.2 to be a little big—6.25 inches long and 4.75 inches high—and a bit heavy at 26 ounces for a pocket gun. However, while a third of my pinkie hangs off the bottom of the magazine, it is more than enough to make me feel like I have a firm grip on the gun, and as a result of the longer frame, you get a high-capacity pistol: 13 rounds for the 9mm and 10 in .40 S&W.

Still not enough? One of the things I like about Springfield Armory is most of its handguns are sold as part of a package, and the XD Mod.2 is no different. With each pistol you get a full-length XD magazine with grip extender—for 16+1 rounds in 9mm or 12+1 in .40 S&W. With the longer magazine/grip extender in place, the XD Mod.2 has a full-length grip. The pistol also ships with a holster, double mag pouch, mag loader and two fiber-optic rods (one red, one green) if you need or want to replace the one in the front sight.



▲ At first blush this might look like an older XD, but the Mod.2 features a new high-ride beavertail, a narrower frame and a newly contoured slide with redesigned serrations.



▲ The Mod.2 sports a fiber-optic front sight, and the pistol ships with two spare fiber-optic rods—one red and one green—in case you need to replace one or prefer to switch to green.



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## MOD SQUAD

The provided belt holster and double magazine pouch are made of injection-molded plastic. This is a high-ride holster; almost half the trigger guard is above the belt line. The holster holds the pistol at a slight forward (FBI) cant and has an integral loop for belts up to 1.5 inches wide. The holster has a single tensioning screw.

The magazine pouch is curved to fit the wearer's body better and holds the magazines in a V-shape rather than parallel. It has double belt loops in back.

Both the holster and the magazine pouch work, but to be honest I consider them entry-level. They're just fine until you can find something that looks, fits or works better. However, there will probably be a lot of Mod.2 owners who never see the need to get another holster or magazine pouch.

Whether you're talking the XD, XD(M), XDS or the new XD Mod.2, they all have the same trigger system

and the same trigger pull. This trigger pull is about the same weight as you'll find with the Glock 17 or Smith & Wesson M&P, but it is a better quality trigger pull.

What do I mean? Trigger pulls on both of my sample XD Mod.2s were 6.5 pounds, the same weight of the average S&W M&P or Glock 17/19 trigger (no matter how much Glock claims its trigger pulls average 5.5 pounds, it just isn't so). The XD trigger pull on my sample felt much lighter because, after take-up, trigger travel was only a quarter of an inch. Reset was only 0.3 inch. This is excellent—and typical for the XD family.

A lot of 1911 fans, if they ever gravitate toward a more modern design, end up owning XDs. Why? First, the grip angle of the XD is similar to the 1911's. Second, the XD has a grip safety just like the 1911, and a lot of people don't like the fact that all it takes for most striker-fired guns to

go off is something getting wedged in the trigger guard. A grip safety keeps this from happening, something doubly important if you're planning

## SPRINGFIELD ARMORY XD MOD.2 SUB-COMPACT

**TYPE:** striker-fired semiauto

**CALIBER:** 9mm Luger (accuracy tested), .40 S&W

**CAPACITY:** 9mm, 13+1 (standard), 16+1 (extended); .40 S&W 9+1 (standard), 12+1 (extended)

**BARREL:** 3.0 in.

**OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH:** 6.25/4.75/1.19 in.

**WEIGHT:** 26 oz. w/empty mag

**CONSTRUCTION:** polymer frame; Melonite-coated forged steel slide

**SIGHTS:** fiber-optic front, two-dot low-profile rear

**TRIGGER:** Ultra Safe Assurance, 6.5 lb. pull (measured)

**SAFETIES:** grip, manual (on trigger) firing pin block

**PRICE:** \$565 (black), \$599 (bi-tone)

**MANUFACTURER/IMPORTER:** Springfield Armory, SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM

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on sticking your handgun in a purse or drawer with loose items rolling around (something, we should note, you shouldn't do).

Officially this is the XD Mod.2 Sub-Compact, and while I consider the Springfield XDS a subcompact pistol, I don't think the Mod.2 is. Fully loaded, even the 9mm is going to be well over 30 ounces, and you're going to need a big, loose or cargo-style pocket to fit it in—and then your pants are going to sag.

This pistol will be perfect for briefcase, purse or holster carry because it is just large enough for just about

everybody to get their whole hand on it and yet not so large it becomes burdensome.

While bigger guns are by nature harder to hide, they are easier to shoot. The XD Mod.2 shoots much more like a full-size pistol than it does a subcompact. Shooting it was fun and enjoyable, and between the sights and grip and trigger pull, hitting what you're aiming at isn't a challenge.

Felt recoil on the 9mm wasn't bad at all, thanks to the grip size, texturing and weight of the pistol. My 12 year old (who is about the size and

weight of an adult female, but don't tell him I said that) had no problems shooting it.

The .40 S&W version was a little bit snappier. Many of the fans of the .40 S&W have in recent years gravitated toward the 9mm as improved hollowpoints have eliminated any performance gap between the two cartridges. And don't take my word for it: That's coming from the FBI's Training Division. However, there are still people who aren't satisfied with anything less than the biggest, heaviest bullet possible, and the XD's frame is built big and strong enough to handle the .40 S&W cartridge, so why not?

More choices are always better, and if you're looking for a compact pistol suitable for self-defense, things have never been better. The Springfield Armory XD is a reliable, durable, proven package, and the new Mod.2 gives you improved ergonomics and better looks. ◎

## ACCURACY RESULTS | SPRINGFIELD XD MOD.2 SUB-COMPACT

9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
Wilson XTP	115	1,144	15	3.0
Hornady TAP/FPD	124	1,071	9	2.1
Black Hills JHP	124	1,138	12	2.4
Hornady XTP	147	941	16	2.5

**Notes:** Accuracy results are the averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured with an Oehler Model 35 12 feet from the muzzle. Abbreviations: JHP, jacketed hollowpoint

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# RIMFIRE SHOOT-OUT

BY BRAD FITZPATRICK | PHOTOS BY VERONICA GETTINGER

**SIX SEMIAUTO .22S ARE PUT THROUGH THEIR PACES TO FIND OUT WHICH OFFER THE BEST BANG FOR THE BUCK.**



**R**unning full-blown handgun tests on six different pistols requires a lot of time and ammunition, and it's a fairly safe bet anyone who passed within earshot of my range is convinced I am single-handedly responsible for the shortage of .22 ammo. But a side-by-side comparison of six of today's best rimfire handguns—Kimber Rimfire Super, Ruger 22/45 Lite, Browning Buck Mark Contour URX, Smith & Wesson M&P Compact .22, Kel-Tec PLR-22 and SIG Sauer Mosquito—shines a light on the newest trends in the semiauto .22 market.

All are blowback designs, and all are chambered for .22 Long Rifle—but there are also some important differences as well. The Mosquito, Rimfire Super, M&P Compact and PLR-22 are based on centerfire designs (at least aesthetically). The Ruger and Browning guns were both originally designed to operate as rimfires. Barrel lengths range from just 3.5 inches on the Smith & Wesson to 10.1 inches for the Kel-Tec. Prices vary widely, too, from suggested retail of just \$389 up to \$1,220.

All six guns set out to accomplish the same task in slightly different ways—grip styles, finishes, sights, overall weight and balance all differed—and each is successful in its

own way. Most shooters will pick a favorite immediately based on styling or brand name, but range data and spec comparisons offer a substantive way to judge them. Here's a rundown of how all six of these .22 semiautos performed on the range.

#### Browning Buck Mark Contour

**URX** Browning's Buck Mark .22 has been around since the mid-1980s, and since then it has undergone a number of minor changes. The Contour URX looks more like a target pistol than the other Buck Marks due to its specially contoured barrel; Ultragrip RX grips; full-length integral optic base; and large, adjustable iron sights. One thing that has not changed about the Buck Mark is its original straight blowback design, which has proven to be reliable for decades, and it was the least-finicky action in the test with regard to load selection. From light target loads to hot hunting rounds, the Buck Mark fed and operated flawlessly.

It also proved extremely accurate. The pistol grouped under two inches with every load except one, and the 5.5-inch barrel (there's also a version with a 7.5-inch barrel) produced higher velocities than any other gun except the Kel-Tec. The grip is extremely comfortable, and the gun's balance is excellent.

One particularly nice feature is the serrated slide, which also has a pair of extended tabs on the rear to make working it secure and easy. The wide, black Pro-Target sights are easy to adjust and easy to see, and the top rail makes it easy to mount an optic. The alloy receiver and barrel have a tough, matte-blue finish, and the wide target-style trigger is gold plated.

The Buck Mark is not the lightest nor the smallest gun in the test, and with an overall length of 9.5 inches and a weight of 36 ounces it's not a gun you'll slip in your pocket, but it's extremely accurate and reliable.

**Kel-Tec PLR-22** Its looks and styling certainly make it stand out in the crowd, but before you discount the Kel-Tec as a gimmick you



## RIMFIRE SHOOT-OUT

← need to shoot this gun. It's based on the company's PLR-16 5.56 pistol, but the PLR-22 uses a blowback action, and its long barrel and extended sight radius (10.1 and 12.5 inches respectively) make it accurate. In addition, the extra barrel length adds an additional 200 fps velocity over the other guns in this test.

The PLR-22 has a 4140 steel bolt that runs along steel guide rails in the polymer receiver, which, in turn, provides a durable and lightweight design. The PLR-22 weighs only 45 ounces, pretty impressive when you consider its overall dimensions. The gun's unique design allows the recoil spring to be located above the barrel, and the ejector is mounted on the guide rail.

The PLR-22 is the only gun in the test (and certainly one of the few .22 pistols in existence) to employ an aperture rear sight, but the setup works well and the PLR-22 is accurate. The rear sight is adjustable for windage, the front for elevation, and the accessory rail on the top allows for optics to be mounted easily.

The rear pistol grip is made of lightweight plastic and has effective and comfortable block texturing. All of the PLR-22 controls are in the same position as they are with the company's PLR-16 and SU-16 guns, with a square magazine release button located directly above the magazine itself and crossbolt safety located above and behind the trigger.

The PLR-22 was fun and pleasant to shoot, although the trigger's creepy seven-pound pull was the heaviest of all guns tested. Still, it was accurate and ran well with everything except light target loads. The hot CCI loads, although the least accurate load in this particular gun, were the most reliable.

**Kimber Rimfire Super** The Rimfire Super looks much like the company's two-tone Custom II .45, and the quality of craftsmanship is immediately apparent. The Rimfire Super drew the most attention at the range, and virtually everyone who saw it wanted one. It features a blowback action instead of the 1911's recoil-operated system, but the

controls are the same, and the Super Rimfire makes an excellent training tool for those who favor the 1911.

With its aluminum slide and frame, the Super Rimfire weighs just 23 ounces unloaded. Like the company's other 1911s, it has a five-inch steel match-grade barrel and match-grade bushing. The dovetailed sights are excellent; the rear is fully adjustable for windage and elevation, and their large, black squared-off target design makes it easy to shoot the gun accurately. The aluminum trigger breaks at about 4.5 pounds and is crisp and clean.

It has nice touches for a rimfire, including a frontstrap with 30 lpi checkering, attractive rosewood grips and excellent fit and finish. These sorts of features don't come cheap: The Super Rimfire carries a suggested retail of \$1,220. The price tag does bring with it an accuracy guarantee of five shots under 1.5 inches at 25 yards, and none of the other guns promise such accuracy.

The Kimber lived up to the guarantee with three of the five loads I



▲ Browning's Buck Mark has a crisp trigger, functions reliably and had the most comfortable and secure grip of the test.



▲ Despite its "out there" aesthetics, the Kel-Tec proved to be an accurate, pleasurable gun to shoot, and the long barrel boosts .22 LR velocities.



▲ The Kimber Rimfire Super is a great-looking pistol that shoots extremely well. With its four-figure price tag you get a rimfire 1911 with an accuracy guarantee.



▲ The SIG Sauer Mosquito has excellent sights and the look and feel of the larger P226. Like many pistols in the test, it cycled better with hotter loads.

## CZ SCORPION EVO 3 S1 PISTOL

tested. It was particularly fond of the Federal ammo, with which it produced groups as small as 1.1 inches. The trigger is excellent and the gun feels great, but early in the test the slide would not return to battery with light loads. Lubrication and a few dozen more shots seemed to solve the problem, and by the end of the test the Kimber was running without a hitch.

**SIG Sauer Mosquito** The Mosquito is essentially a scaled-down version of the company's centerfire P226, and perhaps more than any gun in the test this rimfire version felt much like the larger gun that inspired it. The version I tested was the FDE (flat dark earth) variant with adjustable green-dot sights and a polymer frame to reduce overall weight.

The aluminum zinc-alloy slide is light and runs smoothly, and the single-action trigger breaks at just over five pounds (10 pounds in double-action mode). With a barrel length of 3.9 inches, the Mosquito has an overall length of 7.2 inches and a weight of 24.6 ounces. In addition, it features a Picatinny rail and great balance. It looks good, it's easy to carry, and takedown is a breeze.

The Mosquito was the most finicky gun of the lot, although it was quite accurate with two of the lightest loads: the Remington-Eley Competition Club Xtra and the Lapua Pistol King, both of which averaged less than two inches at 25 yards. The problem wasn't the accuracy; the SIG simply would not eject the spent cases in many instances. With some of the light ammo I had to manually rack the slide between shots. However, there were no problems with the hotter Federal and CCI loads, which kept the Mosquito buzzing and produced respectable groups.

The SIG feels smooth, looks great and points naturally. The grip is wide and has a smoother surface texture than other guns in the test, making it stable and comfortable to shoot, and the tough FDE finish looks good and serves to protect the gun against →

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## RIMFIRE SHOOT-OUT

scrapes and scratches. It earned high marks in every regard except its ability to digest light loads, but with hotter ammo it is an accurate and reliable pistol.

### Smith & Wesson M&P Compact

.22 On the Smith & Wesson website, the brief description of the new M&P Compact .22 contains the word “awesome” once and “fun” (or, closely related, “funner”) four times. If that seems redundant, you don’t understand the purpose of this gun.

Imagine the standard M&P Compact shrunk by 15 percent and made several ounces lighter, and imagine it shoots low-recoiling rimfire cartridges. The M&P Compact .22 features an aluminum alloy frame with black hard-coat anodize finish, a black polymer frame, ambidextrous safety, reversible magazine release and a Picatinny rail.

Takedown is easy, thanks in part to the captured guide rod/spring. Despite its petite size (the gun has a 3.5-inch barrel, the shortest in the test, and weighs just 15.3 ounces) the M&P Compact .22 has a set of big-gun sights, which are windage and

elevation screw-adjustable and with a white-dot design that’s easy to get on target quickly. For anyone who plans to carry an M&P for concealed carry, having this little gun to practice with may be \$389 well spent.

The M&P Compact’s blowback action design handles most loads, although the gun was rather finicky with the lightest loads. With the hotter stuff it ran all day without any problems.

Since it has a short barrel and rather coarse sights for 25-yard accuracy shooting, the S&W couldn’t match the accuracy potential of the longer-barreled Browning and Kel-Tec. It did, however, have a special affinity for the Lapua Pistol King and Remington-Eley cartridges, keeping them both close to two inches at 25 yards. The short barrel also produced the lowest muzzle velocities.

The S&W may not look so great on paper due to its slow velocities and average accuracy, but those elements tell only part of the story. For self-defense drills this is a great option, with its easy-to-see white-dot sights and comfortable grip, and of the guns

I tested this is the one you’d want to carry in a pocket all day. Function was good; there were a few hiccups with the really light stuff, but those were rare, and the Federal and CCI loads kept the M&P humming along.

**Ruger 22/45 Lite** If you want to practice with a .22 that mimics the dimensions and design of your 1911 and can’t swing the money for a Kimber, this is your gun. The grip angle and controls of the 22/45 are the same as you’ll find on a standard 1911, but this just one reason to buy the 22/45. The gun is also incredibly accurate, isn’t finicky about what you feed it and has one of the best triggers of the bunch.

The 22/45 traces its lineage to the original MK I, and it’s practically prehistoric when compared to the other guns listed here. However, this design has been evolving over the years and has been polished to near perfection. It features a straight blowback design, one-piece aluminum frame and barrel, Zytel polymer grip frame, adjustable sights and a fluted 4.4-inch barrel with threads for a suppressor.

The magazine holds 10 rounds, →



▲ Smith & Wesson's M&P Compact .22 isn't a target gun, but as a training gun or a backyard plinker it excels, and it's a fun way to train if you carry a centerfire M&P for defense.



▲ The Ruger 22/45 Lite is a highly advanced, reliable pistol capable of outstanding accuracy. The control location and grip angle mimic the 1911.

## SPECIFICATIONS

	Ruger 22/45 Lite	Browning Buck Mark Contour UDX	Kimber Super Rimfire	SIG Sauer Mosquito	Kel-Tec PLR-22	Smith & Wesson M&P Compact .22
Capacity	10	10	10	10	26	10
Barrel (in)	4.4	5.5	5	3.9	10.1	3.5
Overall Length	8.5	9.5	8.7	7.2	18.5	6.65
Weight (oz)	23.0	36.0	23.0	24.6	45.0	15.3
Grip	Zytel polymer	Ultragrip RX rubber	rosewood	polymer	polymer	polymer
Finish	black anodize	matte blue	satin silver/matte black	flat dark earth	matte	black anodize
Trigger pull (lb.)	4.6	5.1	5.1	5.3	6.8	5.6
Sights	adj. open	adj. open	adj. open	adj. open	adj. aperture	adj. open
Price	\$499	\$549	\$1,220	\$426	\$390	\$389

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### RIMFIRE SHOOT-OUT

← and the spring-depression button on the side of the magazine makes loading comfortable and easy. The sights are large and square, and the rear sight is screw-adjustable for both windage and elevation. The Ruger weighs just 23 ounces empty and is 8.5 inches long overall.

The Ruger managed to produce two groups under 1.25 inches (both with Lapua ammo) and did almost as well with the Federal loads. It was also fond of CCI's hot 36-grain hollowpoint, and since the 22/45 comes with an accessory rail it would be a great small game pistol with an optic in place.

The trigger pull was among the very best in the group, breaking at just over 4.5 pounds with minimal creep or overtravel. As I mentioned, the Ruger was unaffected by light target loads and ate them without difficulty. The controls are easy to use and find (especially, as previously mentioned, if you shoot a 1911 regularly), and the gun balances well in the hand.

There's a reason Ruger has been making .22 pistols for so many years, and the 22/45 is the culmination of the constant improvements that this design has seen since its introduction.

### ACCURACY RESULTS

.22 Long Rifle	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
<b>BROWNING BUCK MARK CONTOUR URX</b>				
Aguila SuperExtra	40	932	11.3	2.09
Federal AutoMatch	40	1,019	14.0	1.53
CCI Stinger	36	1,251	12.8	1.95
Remington-Eley Club Xtra	40	916	11.4	1.61
Lapua Pistol King	40	880	12.6	1.32
<b>KEL-TEC PLR-22</b>				
Aguila SuperExtra	40	1,030	14.0	1.45
Federal AutoMatch	40	1,155	13.5	1.91
CCI Stinger	36	1,412	15.7	2.52
Remington-Eley Club Xtra	40	991	12.3	2.03
Lapua Pistol King	40	969	10.4	1.51
<b>KIMBER RIMFIRE SUPER</b>				
Aguila SuperExtra	40	935	12.2	1.46
Federal AutoMatch	40	1,044	13.2	1.27
CCI Stinger	36	1,252	12.7	1.91
Remington-Eley Club Xtra	40	927	11.5	1.79
Lapua Pistol King	40	898	11.4	1.32
<b>SIG SAUER MOSQUITO FDE</b>				
Aguila SuperExtra	40	920	8.9	2.11
Federal AutoMatch	40	966	12.3	2.25
CCI Stinger	36	1,205	13.6	2.52
Remington-Eley Club Xtra	40	914	11.0	1.72
Lapua Pistol King	40	894	9.4	1.85
<b>SMITH &amp; WESSON M&amp;P .22</b>				
Aguila SuperExtra	40	831	11.2	2.53
Federal AutoMatch	40	939	13.1	2.32
CCI Stinger	36	1,083	13.9	2.89
Remington-Eley Club Xtra	40	813	9.7	2.15
Lapua Pistol King	40	784	10.4	2.02
<b>RUGER 22/45 LITE</b>				
Aguila SuperExtra	40	910	12.2	2.11
Federal AutoMatch	40	981	15.3	1.46
CCI Stinger	36	1,176	12.8	1.56
Remington-Eley Club Xtra	40	899	11.4	1.88
Lapua Pistol King	40	874	9.9	1.32

**Notes:** Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a fixed rest. Velocity figures are 10-shot averages recorded on a ProChrono digital chronograph placed 10 feet from the muzzle

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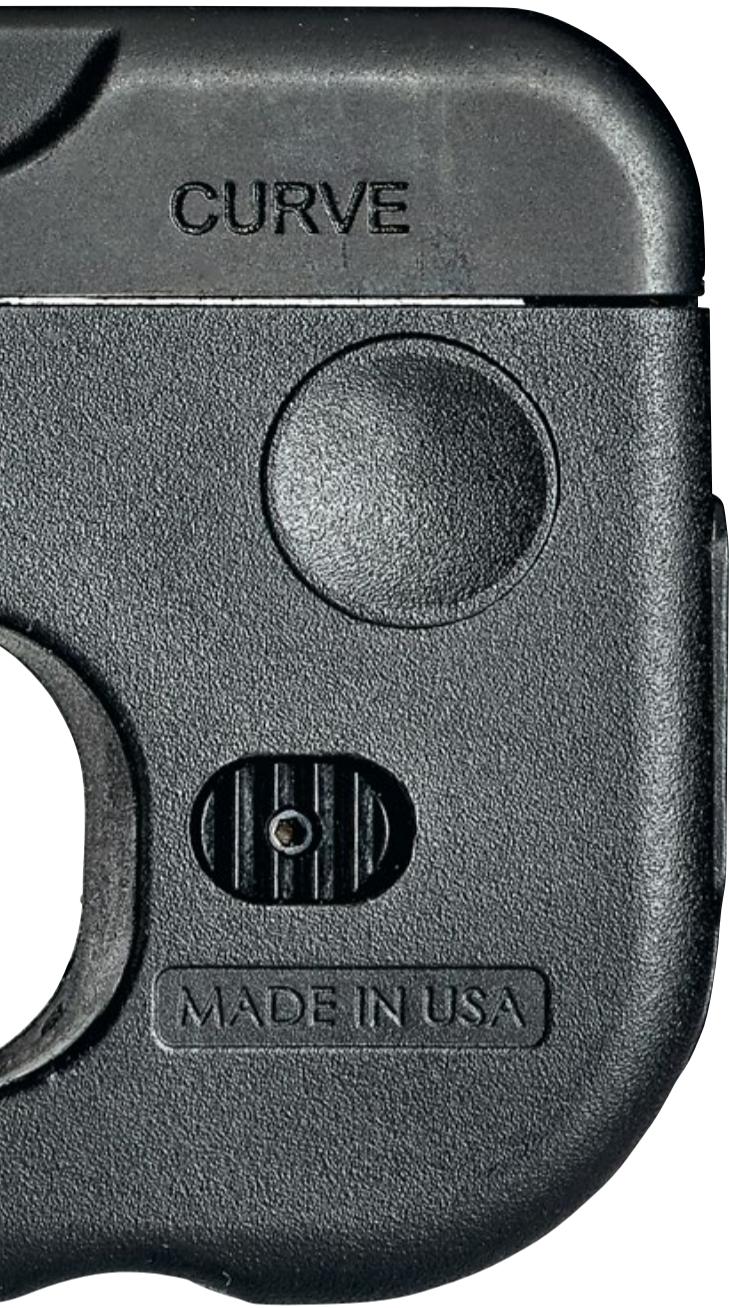
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# CURVE BALL

BY JAMES TARR

**TAURUS TURNS HANDGUN DESIGN UPSIDE DOWN WITH THE CURVE. THE QUESTION IS WHETHER IT'S RIGHT FOR YOU.**



Once or twice a year when a company wants to show off a new product to gun writers but still keep it secret, it has them sign a non-disclosure agreement, and that gets me excited because it means the company is going to be showing us something not just new but probably different.

The Curve is definitely different. Your first reaction upon seeing it will probably be, "What the heck is that thing?" Aesthetically it resembles a bar of black pumice soap that got a bit melted in the sun and only vaguely resembles a handgun.

At its heart the Curve is a 6+1 shot double-action-only .380 automatic with a 2.5-inch barrel and an integrated light/laser unit. It's made in the U.S. and has a suggested retail of only \$392. With its 10.2-ounce empty weight and 5.2-inch length it is easily carried and concealed, but there is a lot more to it than that. For one thing, the entire polymer body of the gun, including the grip, is curved—specifically, curved to wrap around your body (if you're a right-hander) as you carry the gun on your hip or in your front pocket. Taurus is claiming this is a first, and it's not lying.

The tagline for the Curve is "The Gun You Wear."

When the people at Taurus were showing us the Curve, one thing they mentioned was how nobody had ever designed a gun to fit the human body before. At the time my thought was, "That's because engineers design handguns to fit the hand." I was curious as to whether a gun designed to curve around the body would fit in the hand at all, much less comfortably. It does, or at least it is not uncomfortable. While the Curve's curved grip does feel a bit unusual, it is as shootable as any other similar-size .380.

Currently there are no left-handed Curves and no plans for any. I did have a left-hander try the gun, and he was surprised it didn't feel bad in his hand. But when he tried to conceal the gun so he could access it with his left hand, he found the Curve's curve is all wrong.

My first question upon seeing the curved grip was whether the pistol is fed by a curved magazine. The answer is no. The magazine of the Curve is straight, but the polymer base pad is curved and contoured to fit the grip. In fact, the base pad is the magazine release; push in on the textured depression on the left side and the magazine will come out. This is not fast, but then again this pistol isn't meant for combat but for the con-

## CURVE BALL

→ cealed-carry market. Actually, I think it is meant for a very specific niche of the concealed-carry market, a point I'll get to later.

I wish the grip was a little longer so I could get all of my fingers on it. However, with its straight maga-

zine and angled base pad, if the designers extended the grip, I don't know if they would be able to use a straight magazine. The gun would also be harder to conceal, but this is always the trade-off with handguns: The easier they are to conceal the

harder they are to shoot.

There are no external controls on the Curve—no magazine release button, takedown lever or slide stop. There is a slide stop, but it is internal, and you have to remove the empty magazine and rack the slide to get it forward.

The Curve has a magazine disconnect safety. I am on record as saying magazine disconnect safeties have no place on pocket guns, and I will repeat it here.

If for some reason the magazine in your gun gets dislodged, when you pull it out in an emergency instead of getting to fire the one round in the chamber, you instead get nothing and then have to figure out what went wrong. The only saving grace about the Curve is that due to the magazine release being on the actual magazine, and flush to the grip, dislodging it accidentally is much less likely.

There are aggressively textured strips on the front and back of the frame for gripping, and they will not snag on anything. The sides of the frame are smooth. There is a groove in the underside of the trigger guard right where the index finger of your support hand will rest if you're shooting with two hands.

The laser/light module is integrated into the frame, and it features one red laser below two



▲ The Curve certainly looks like nothing you've ever seen before, and in a pocket it has an outline similar to a wallet. There are no external controls; even the slide lock is internal.

## TAURUS CURVE

**TYPE:** hammer-fired DAO semiauto

**CALIBER:** .380 ACP

**CAPACITY:** 6+1

**WEIGHT:** 10.2 oz

**BARREL:** 2.5

**OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH:** 5.2/3.7/1.2 in.

**FRAME:** polymer

**CONSTRUCTION:** polymer frame; black oxide-coated forged steel slide

**TRIGGER:** DAO, 6.5 lb. (measured)

**SIGHTS:** none

**SAFETIES:** magazine disconnect, internal

**PRICE:** \$392

**MANUFACTURER:** Taurus USA,  
TAURUSUSA.COM

white LED bulbs. The factory sets the switch to turn on both the flashlight and laser, but it can be changed to just flashlight or just laser. The switch to activate the light/laser is a serrated button set flush in the housing on the right side of the gun, just forward of the trigger guard. The switch is pushed forward to turn the light/laser on and pushed forward again to turn it off.

The LED lights have a slight blue tint and put out 25 lumens. They seem brighter and are more than bright enough to identify a threat at typical self-defense distances. They

are manufactured by LaserLyte, and there are windage/elevation adjustment screws for the laser. The module has a six-minute auto-shutoff feature as well, which many people will like.

While the provided switch works and is completely snag-free, I think the activation mode is wrong for this kind of pistol. Having to use your trigger finger to find a small non-protruding button as you're keying on a threat and adrenaline floods your system is not a good combination. A pocket/compact pistol should have instinctive laser/light

controls—i.e., squeeze the grip and it turns on. Taurus reportedly does have plans for a future Curve model without the light/laser module, and it should be even more affordable.

I think of the Curve as a pocket gun, but straight from the factory you have two alternative carry options with the Curve: a belt clip attached to the gun at the factory and a Kydex pseudo-holster that clips over the laser/light module and covers the trigger guard.

The holster has a lanyard made of common 550 paracord, and you're supposed to attach the lanyard →

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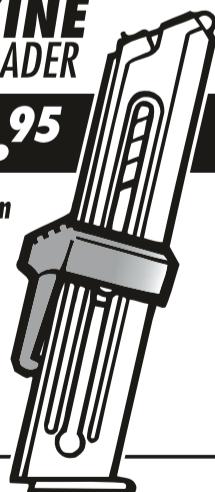
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## CURVE BALL

→ to your belt and then stuff the pistol down inside your waistband. As you draw the pistol, the holster pops off the gun. This actually works. The pistol itself is so free of sharp edges that stuffing it down inside your pants without a proper holster isn't a problem. However, because it is so small, and curves to fit your body, getting it out and into play quickly isn't so easy.

The front of the Curve looks unusual. This is because they cut the end of the barrel to match the curved profile of the slide. I like the way it looks and think it has to have some slight effect on reducing

muzzle rise much the same way the slant break on the AK-47 does.

The slide has a low profile, with fish scale-like texturing at the rear. Even with the fish scales there isn't a lot to grab onto. There is a loaded-chamber indicator in the top of the slide.

One thing you'll quickly notice is the slide doesn't have sights. Pocket guns without sights or with minimal or crude sights are nothing new. This type of firearm is, after all, designed to be used for self-defense at spitting distance.

You will notice a white three-armed cross etched into the rear of the slide, with the center of the cross at about the same spot as the center of the bore. Taurus refers to this as a "bore-axis sighting system for instinctual shooting." The idea here is the shooter is supposed to point the pistol at the threat, and the crosshair is the sight.

This bore-axis sighting system is a lot like Communism: It sounds like a great idea until you actually try to implement it in the real world: using actual people. In daylight you're going to be looking over →



▲ Taurus also offers a holster that attaches to a belt via parachute cord. On the draw the holster falls away.



▲ A factory-fitted clip is a simple but effective method to carry the gun.

## ACCURACY RESULTS | TAURUS CURVE

Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
.380			
Pow'RBall JHP	70	1,063	21
CorBon DPX	80	944	13
Hornady FTX	90	883	17
Hornady XTP	90	871	16
			2.2

**Notes:** Accuracy results are the averages of four five-shot groups at 15 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured with an Oehler Model 35 12 feet from the muzzle. Abbreviation: JHP, jacketed hollowpoint



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## CURVE BALL

← the top of the gun at the threat, not at rear of the slide. In marginal lighting or darkness you're going to have the flashlight on, and the rear of the gun will be a black silhouette

and you won't be able to see those crosshairs at all even if you try.

On the writer junket we shot early production Curves, and we put well over 1,000 rounds through

the small guns in a short period of time. These types of guns rarely go through more than a box or two of ammunition in a lifetime, and we didn't lube them while we were on the range. There were only a couple of malfunctions that I saw, and I can't be certain they weren't user induced (big hands and small, unfamiliar guns sometimes don't mix). I didn't have any malfunctions, but I did find the "bore-axis" crosshairs were almost impossible to use on the well-lit indoor range. I either aimed the gun by looking over the slide or used the laser—and then I could shoot it as well as any other DAO .380.

Throughout our marathon shooting session none of the lights or lasers on the guns failed or had problems. That may seem commonplace, but it's not. It's quite common for lasers especially to blink off during firing due to poor electrical contacts. The LaserLyte laser/light



▲ As it comes from the factory, activating the LaserLyte unit turns on both light and laser, a setting you can change.



▲ A "crosshair" on the back of the Curve is supposed to act as an aiming device, but Tarr didn't find it to be usable.

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units on the Curves didn't suffer from this.

Trigger pull on my sample was smooth and didn't stack, and it broke at a relatively crisp 6.5 pounds. Trigger pull distance wasn't bad for a DAO. My only issue was how the trigger did not break until very close to the front of the frame. This is not a striker-fired gun but instead has a hammer, and it can be seen moving as you pull the trigger through the slot in the rear of the slide. At no point does it protrude from the slide. The pistol does not have a restrike capability.

I wish the trigger broke a little bit sooner, but to be honest I have the same complaint with just about every pocket gun on the market. The decent trigger allowed me to shoot up to the gun's potential. However, because the gun had no sights I had to use the laser to do all of my accuracy testing, something I've honestly never had to do before. Like I said,

the Curve is a bit different.

The Curve comes with two six-round magazines, the Kydex holster with lanyard and keys for the internal lock, all in cutouts inside a curved orange pistol case you are not likely to lose inside your safe.

Taurus says the Curve won't print against your clothing and make itself known. I think this is correct. It isn't shaped like a gun, has no sharp edges and of course is curved. It is specifically designed to have a non-gun profile, so if you put it in your pocket instead of inside your waistband it won't print like a gun. Here the designers were eminently successful. In a back pocket it looks like a wallet.

As far as the design of the Curve goes I think it is aimed at first-time gun buyers as much as it is anyone else. It looks more like a gun-shaped iPhone case or a Taser than it does a handgun. Because of its looks and the integrated light/laser, it has

already gotten some attention from the mainstream press. Anything that brings more people to the gun-owning side of the fence is a good thing. I can see it being marketed as a "self-defense system" in non-firearm publications.

It is a rare firearm whose design survives intact first contact with the consumer. There are always tweaks, enhancements and alterations. User feedback is always an important part of the product evolution, and I'm guessing user feedback will result in Taurus adding sights to the Curve somewhere down the road. Hopefully it will also change the switch for the light/laser and get rid of the magazine disconnect safety.

Whenever you step outside the box, you take a risk. Kudos to Taurus for taking the risk. I don't think the Curve is perfect, but it is exactly what the company wanted it to be and does what its designers intended it to do.



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# BALANCE OF POWER

BY JOSEPH VON BENEDIKT

**RUGER'S .480 CARTRIDGE, A VERSATILE HEAVY MAGNUM, IS BACK IN THE SUPER REDHAWK.**



In 2001 Ruger and Hornady teamed up to introduce a heavy magnum handgun cartridge arguably offering the best balance of shootability and power available. Unfortunately, within a few years the handguns chambered for it were discontinued. Why? Reports on the rumor mill pointed to occasional extraction issues (investigation proved most to stem from handloaders pushing pressure limits), and the company halted production to find out if there was indeed a problem.

Ruger has one of the most—if not the most—aggres-

sive test protocols in the industry. Most companies would not have picked up on the anomaly at all. In a recent discussion with Ruger engineer Mark Gurney, he said every single charge hole of every cylinder in every handgun Ruger builds is tested with a proof load. In the case of magnum handgun cartridges, proof loads run a jaw-dropping 40 percent higher in pressure than standard loads.

This is important because most .480 Super Redhawk revolvers are six-shooters (a few five-shot versions →

## BALANCE OF POWER

were built late during its original run), and detractors say the cylinder walls are somewhat thinner than the cylinder walls of similar five-shot competing models in .454 Casull, .475 Linebaugh and other heavy magnum revolvers.

Fear not. Said cylinders are constructed of incredibly tough, resilient Carpenter 465 stainless steel (in Gurney's words, "Damn near impossible to drill") and vacuum heat-treated. Ruger tested both five-shot and six-shot versions, and



**▲ While many heavy magnums hold five shots, the Super Redhawk .480 is a six-shooter. But don't fret about cylinder walls: The steel is of highest quality, and every charge hole is proof-tested.**

### RUGER SUPER REDHAWK

**TYPE:** Double-action revolver

**CALIBER:** .480 Ruger

**CAPACITY:** 6

**BARREL:** 2.5 in., 7.5 in. (tested), 1:18 RH twist

**OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH:** 13.00/6.30/1.79 in.

**WEIGHT:** 53 oz.

**CONSTRUCTION:** machined steel

**SIGHTS:** ramp front w/orange insert, adjustable rear

**TRIGGER:** single action, 4 lb., 8 oz. (measured); double action, N/A

**GRIPS:** Hogue Tamer Monogrip

**FINISH:** polished stainless

**PRICE:** \$1,079

**MANUFACTURER:** Ruger, RUGER.COM

found cylinders with six holes were entirely adequate strength-wise—and of course offer the advantage of an extra round on tap.

Descended from a shortened .45-70 cartridge, the .480 Ruger differs from its closest cousin—the .475 Linebaugh—in that it's 0.21 inch shorter and the rim is narrower, a concession allowing six rounds to fit into a Redhawk cylinder. At 1.285 inches, the case matches the .44 Magnum in length.

And .480 Ruger cartridges will safely fit and fire in .475 Linebaugh chambers, much like the .38 Special will fit and function in .357 Magnum chambers. But don't make the mistake of thinking the .480 Ruger is a reduced-performance round; it operates at 48,000 p.s.i. compared to the Linebaugh's 50,000 p.s.i. Due to the slightly higher pressure and greater case capacity, the Linebaugh pushes like-weight bullets a bit faster, but the margin is slight—typically under 100 fps.

Bullet diameter for the .480 Ruger 0.475 inch, which it shares with proprietary cartridges such as the .475 Linebaugh and .475 JDJ, as well as a few wildcats such as the



**▲ The Super Redhawk has scope-base cuts in the topstrap, which makes optics mounting quick and easy with the supplied rings.**

.475 Wildey Magnum. As far as I'm aware, the .480 Ruger is the only .475 caliber production round available. Unfortunately, bullet choices are scarce—one of the reasons the .480 never really took off when it was first introduced.

Early on, magnum handgunners contrasted the .480 Ruger with the .454 Casull, an unfortunate comparison. The Casull is loaded to rifle-like pressures (65,000 p.s.i.), and resulting velocity and energy are tremendous. And so is the Casull's recoil. The lower-pressure .480 Ruger, on the other hand, is just the opposite: efficient and authoritative yet relatively civilized in recoil.

Enterprising handloaders familiar with the high-pressure Casull predictably attempted to push the pressures of the .480 Ruger beyond factory spec. The .480 case wasn't meant for such pressures, resulting in the aforementioned sticky extraction issues.

Another significant advantage shared by both the .480 Ruger and .475 Linebaugh cartridges when compared to the powerful .454 Casull is that of increased bullet weight. As physicists tell us, a small increase in projectile diameter results in a dramatic increase in weight. The Ruger and Linebaugh cartridges can comfortably push bullets weighing up to and in excess of 400 grains, compared to the 300- and 325-grain projectiles considered heavy in the Casull.

Some shooters have noted heavy .44 Magnum loads aren't far behind the .480, particularly where "light" 275- to 300-grain bullets are concerned. It's true the .480 really shines with stout, heavy bullets approaching 400 grains pushed to 1,200 or 1,300 fps, but the difference is fairly significant even with lighter bullets. A .44 Magnum projectile has to be really steaming to generate 1,000 ft.-lbs. of energy, while many .480 Ruger projectiles easily generate between 1,300 and 1,400 ft.-lbs.—a 30 to 40 percent increase.

For hunters, the .480 provides a great balance of energy and trajectory. Pushed at 1,550 fps and sighted in at 100 yards, in standard atmospheric conditions at my home elevation of 5,050 feet, a 275-grain Barnes DPX projectile carries 1,235 fps and 931 ft.-lbs. of energy at 100 yards. Impressively, it has a 150-yard point blank range on a 10-inch target, dropping seven inches at 150 yards and still carrying 1,135 fps and 786 ft.-lbs. of energy. At 200 yards it drops 21 inches; at 250 yards, 42 inches.

Heavier bullets wallop harder but drop more since they can't be pushed as fast. Hornady's original 400-grain XTP pushed to 1,250 fps packed a walloping 1,406 ft.-lbs. of energy at the muzzle and 1,053 at 100 yards. Zeroed at 100 yards, it had a high mid-range trajectory of about five inches at about 60 yards, and dropped almost 10 inches at 150 yards.

Fans of monstrously powerful handgun cartridges will rightly point out two cartridges eclipse all others: Smith & Wesson's .460 Magnum and .500 Magnum. I'm a fan—in a way—of both, and I'm not here to argue the .480 Ruger is equal to either. However, I've shot both of the S&W magnums extensively, and both have considerably more recoil and blast than the .480 Ruger does. Plus, the massive X-Frame Smith & Wesson revolvers pass out of the realm of an everyday packing handgun, while Ruger's Super Redhawk squeaks in just under the cusp of "too big."

While we're on the subject of handgun models, many shooters questioned why the .480 Ruger wasn't initially introduced in Ruger's Super Blackhawk or at least jointly introduced in the Super Blackhawk and the Super Redhawk. In fact, some believe the .480's sales languished because there wasn't a single-action version. Ruger officials were mum when I asked about the possibility of a .480 Super Blackhawk, but I'm keeping my fingers crossed.

Not that the Super Redhawk is a poor choice. Frankly it's probably →

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## BALANCE OF POWER

the better of the two options for a cartridge such as the .480 Ruger. Admirably overbuilt, it's got a solid, smooth action, a quite good single-action pull and tends to be easy to shoot well. And, of course, it offers the double-action option in case you want to get those big bullets down-range more quickly.

I ordered a Super Redhawk from Ruger and set about collecting ammo for the test. Currently there are four ammunition companies loading the .480 Ruger: Hornady, Federal, Cor-Bon and Buffalo Bore. I managed to get ammo from all except Buffalo Bore. Originally I'd hoped to hand-load some heavy-bullet test loads, but even component bullets proved hard to come by. The only component bullets I could find was a box of Barnes 275-grain DPX—the same bullet I already had with the Cor-Bon load and not exactly a heavyweight. This exposes one of the .480 Ruger's glaring disadvantages: ammo and component availability.

I mounted a fine vintage Leupold handgun scope on the Super Redhawk—a relatively easy task thanks to the factory scope base cuts in the top rib—and shot three five-shot

groups with each type of ammunition from a sandbag rest at 25 yards and averaging the result for accuracy. Results are shown in the accompanying table.

Interestingly, Federal's 275-grain load averaged 1,533 fps, almost 200 fps faster than advertised, while the Cor-Bon load—which was slightly the more accurate of the two—clocked a pedestrian 1,434, more than 100 fps slower than advertised. Hornady's 325-grain load achieved 1,291 fps, about 60 fps slower than touted.

Lyman's 49th Reloading Manual has data for Hodgdon 2400 powder and 275-grain projectiles in the .480, albeit with lead-core bullets. With this particular test revolver I achieved more than 1,500 fps with medium charges and started getting sticky extraction and excessive velocities (1,600-plus fps) as I approached max loads, demonstrating once again the importance of adhering to starting charge weights when developing handloads.

Accuracy on this particular test sample wasn't inspiring. However, I know fellow writer Max Prasac has owned and used various .480 Rugers since they were first introduced, and

he has handloads that shade under an inch at 50 yards with his most recent Super Redhawk.

With clinical testing complete, I set up a nine-inch steel gong at 100 yards and a Range Systems full-size steel torso target at 200 yards and had some fun shooting the .480 from field positions. After finessing the scope's 100-yard zero I was able to ring the 100-yard gong five consecutive times, and while the 200-yard torso target proved more challenging, a head-high hold landed most of my shots in the belly-button region.

Recoil, as anticipated, was big but not unfriendly. After firing close to 80 rounds during my first range session I had none of the vibrating, tingling semi-numbness in my shooting hand and wrist I always experience after shooting only a box or so of either of the heavy Smith & Wesson magnums or the .454 Casull.

Although beautifully balanced and versatile, there are some scenarios wherein the cartridges mentioned above are more suitable than the .480 Ruger. If I ever had to stop—not kill, stop—a charging grizzly bear with a handgun, I'd want a .500 S&W Magnum loaded with heavy bullets. On the other end of the stick, if I was in the habit of attempting long-for handgun shots on whitetails, I'd opt for the .460 S&W Magnum and its steamy velocities—and thus flatter trajectories—with light projectiles.

But if deer, elk, moose and black bear at typical handgun distances were on the menu, the .480 Ruger would be hard to surpass. Like a one-ton farm pickup, it may not be the raciest thing in town, but it's pretty darn good at getting the job done—whatever the job may be.

Will the .480 Ruger survive the next decade? Who knows? Although it's arguably the most versatile of the heavy magnums, it's still a niche cartridge and unlikely to generate widespread popularity. However, among savvy big-bore handgunners who appreciate versatility and efficiency, it might just be the golden ticket. ☀



▲ Federal and Cor-Bon loads feature 275-grain all-copper bullets (l.) while Hornady's offering is topped off with a 325-grain XTP (r.) There's not a lot of choice in loaded ammo or component bullets, which hurts the .480's popularity.

## ACCURACY RESULTS | RUGER SUPER REDHAWK

.480 Ruger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Extreme Spread	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
Barnes DPX*	275	1,527	66	26	1.81
Cor-Bon DPX	275	1,434	69	25	2.09
Federal Premium Expander	275	1,533	43	15	2.23
Hornady XTP	325	1,291	40	16	2.19

Notes: (\*handload) Accuracy results are the averages of three five-shot groups fired from a sandbag rest at 25 yards. Velocity is the average of five rounds measured 12 feet from the muzzle with a Shooting Chrony chronograph.

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# DUCK AND COVER

BY RICHARD NANCE | PHOTOS BY ALFREDO RICO

## WHEN THE SHOOTING STARTS, JOB ONE IS TO GET BEHIND SOMETHING THAT WILL STOP A BULLET.

In a gunfight, aggressiveness is paramount, but it must be tempered with sound judgment and understanding of defensive strategy. Since the bad guy's bullets could injure you just as easily as yours could him, it's a good idea to have something between you and him capable of stopping incoming rounds—what we call cover. Cover could be a fire hydrant, the wheel of a vehicle, a tree trunk or anything else offering true protection from bullets.

Cover is relative to the type threat you're facing and the angle of attack. Depending on your adversary's choice of firearm and ammunition, an object that absorbs one fired round may not protect you from a second, and even the best cover will be of no use if the gunman flanks you. But before we can derive any benefit from cover, we must first learn to recognize it.

Recognizing cover can be equated to defensive driving. When we're behind the wheel, we're constantly scanning our environment for an escape route in case we're forced to take immediate evasive action. If the car in front of us brakes suddenly, it's important to know if there is a steep embankment to our right or an oncoming semi to our left. In the same manner, as we go about our daily lives we must take note of everyday objects that could protect us from gunfire. Next time you're walking through a parking lot, entering a bank or even sitting in your favorite chair at home, consider which objects in the immediate vicinity could be used as cover.

Cover awareness is important whether or not you're armed. In fact, when you're unarmed, it might even be more important because you're unable to return fire. In such a case, the gunman is free to fire at will because he's not concerned about being shot.

Once you've identified potential cover, you need to decide when and how you're going to position it between you and your adversary. Like most aspects of personal defense, there's no one right answer. When facing an assailant armed with a firearm, do you move to cover at a moderate pace and fire at him to hopefully stop the threat, or do you sprint to cover while drawing your firearm before engaging? I think under most circumstances I'd prefer to run for cover then shoot from a stationary position. Running minimizes the time you're exposed to incoming rounds, and stopping to shoot is more conducive to accuracy.

Another concept worth knowing is "shadow of cover." While the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, moving directly from one piece of cover to the next is not always the safest route. For instance, let's assume you're behind cover, but since the assailant, who's at the 12 o'clock position, is closing distance, you opt to run to a position of cover located 10 yards away in the four o'clock position.

Rather than taking the shortest path to the four o'clock position, your best bet is to run 10 yards to the six o'clock position and then make a hard left to get behind cover. By running in an "L" shape as opposed to in a straight line, you're protected by the cover of the first object a lot longer than if you had run in a straight line from the first piece of cover to the second.

Getting to cover is one thing, but maximizing cover is yet another. The goal is to get as much of your body behind it as possible. Depending on the size and shape of the particular object you're behind, you may need to crouch, kneel or even lie down to accomplish this. That's why it's important to be well-versed in shooting from atypical positions such as kneeling and prone because they allow you to get rounds on target while deriving maximum benefit from your cover.

When someone's shooting at you, there's a strong inclination to get as close to cover as possible. While this may be comforting, it may not be the best tactic. For one thing, the closer you are to cover, the less room you have to maneuver, and when you're directly behind →



▲ Residential doors offer little protection. In the author's tests this aluminum-clad door stopped only birdshot.

## DUCK AND COVER

← cover you have a narrower field of view—making it harder to spot an assailant trying to flank you.

Last but certainly not least, you're more susceptible to getting hit by skipped rounds. Say you're leaning over the hood of a vehicle to steady your arms for an accurate shot. In this instance the bad guy doesn't necessarily have to shoot you. Depending on the angle of fire, a round striking the hood, which is a much larger target than you are, could still hit you.

However, there are times when getting right against cover is a good idea, such as when you need to make a precision shot. Being able to steady your body or the gun against some sort of support will enable you to shoot better. Also, being close to cover rather than several feet back affords you a more favorable angle when an assailant tries to flank you.



While you may not see the assailant as quickly as you would if you were back from cover, the assailant would have to actually move farther to take a shot at you. For the same reason, crowding cover makes sense when there is more than one assailant shooting at you.

When possible, shoot around cover instead of over it. Shooting over cover is more predictable and exposes more of your head. Of course, repeatedly peeking around the same side of cover will enable the bad guy to align his sights on the spot your head keeps popping out, so mix it up.

And while it's less of a concern with a handgun than a rifle, be mindful of your muzzle's position. Gun sights are higher than the muzzle, and it's possible your sights will tell you the shot is clear while the muzzle is not.

Over the years, I've had a lot of opportunities during training and in my role as host on a couple of Sportsman Channel television shows to see how well certain objects are at stopping bullets. Recently, I visited a junkyard where I picked up a door, tailgate and two wheels with tires from a compact pickup truck. When I got home, I tossed an old

◀ Between the toughness of the steel rims and surrounding components such as brake drums and rotors and axles, a vehicle's wheels offer solid protection from handgun bullets.



▲ Don't think ducking behind a car door will do you much good. Had it not been for an internal mechanism, all handgun bullets would've penetrated it.

aluminum-clad front door atop the heap of vehicle parts and headed to the range with an array of firearms and ammunition for a test of bullet penetration.

I placed each object about seven yards downrange and proceeded to shoot each with a variety of ammunition including .22 Long Rifle, 9mm Luger, .45 ACP, .223 Remington, No. 6 shot and 00 buck.

First up was the residential door. Not surprisingly, all but the No. 6 shot cut through the door like a hot knife through butter. Although a sturdier door would certainly provide better ballistic protection, it would also be a lot more expensive, which is why aluminum-clad wooden doors are so prevalent.

The driver's side door of a compact pickup stopped the .22 LR and shotgun rounds. The .223 rounds easily penetrated the door, as did all of the handgun rounds with the exception of a Hornady Critical Defense 9mm round that happened to strike the window lever assembly, stopping the bullet dead in its tracks.

The pickup's tailgate fared much the same. In this case, all the handgun rounds passed through.

Two parts of a vehicle providing the best protective cover are the engine block and the wheels. I was unable to score an engine block to shoot, but I did have those wheels and tires.

All rounds passed through the tires themselves, but the metal wheels easily withstood the handgun rounds. And when you realize wheels are surrounded by axles, brake drums and disks and other components, it's easy to see why competent instructors advocate using them as cover.

In police work, we call failing to use cover the John Wayne Syndrome. Remember, you're not John Wayne, and you're not bulletproof. While anything you can position between you and a bad guy shooting at you is better than nothing, try to get behind true cover.

# Bad News For Survival Food

Something just happened that explains why tons and tons of survival food are literally flying off warehouse shelves. We've never seen anything like it before. Right now, our truckers can barely keep up with the rapidly rising demand. We have even been getting reports that this food is actually sold out in many parts of the country – and it might stay that way for a while.

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We were determined to figure out why so much survival food has been disappearing... and where it was going. So we did some digging around on our own and it paid off.

Wait until you see what we found out. It caught us totally by surprise because it involves a well-known agency that is responsible for aiding Americans in times of crisis. The possibility that they could have something to do with a potential survival food shortage made no sense to us ... unless they knew something we didn't. We were determined to discover the truth for ourselves – and for you.

Now, it was impossible to say precisely what these people were up to, but we knew they must be planning for something really big – something really out of the ordinary.

## It gets even better – we have the proof in writing!

Just as we were beginning our investigation, our warehouse manager



**They Just Caught Something Nobody Was Supposed To See**

was shocked to receive a request from an official of that very same agency.

### They wanted to know:

- How much survival food did we have on hand?
- How quickly we can produce more?
- Where is inventory kept?
- Just how fast could they get their hands on it?

We don't know about you, but any time outsiders starts prying into the affairs of private businesses like ours, we can't help but get concerned – and frankly, we are. After all, here's an agency we never heard from before suddenly asking questions about foods intended solely for emergency use in a disaster. Certainly makes you think, doesn't it?

Well, we have a few questions of our own. We'd like someone to tell us exactly what is going on here. Is there really a catastrophe waiting in the wings? Has terrorist activity been discovered in the U.S.? Is the nation's food supply threatened?

### Know what we heard? Nothing.

It's like talking to a wall. But we're going to keep the pressure on until we get some believable information. The truth is, revealing a plot like this could land us in some serious hot water. There's a reason they're not going public with any details. But we are absolutely convinced they are up to something. And we think you and every other American really deserves an explanation.

Listen, we all know most people will be woefully unprepared when disaster strikes. The smart among us prefer to take steps to ensure that in a crisis, we won't be relying on someone else to take care of our families. That's our job.



Anyone not taking action will find themselves in the same boat as millions of other brainwashed souls who go through life thinking everything is fine. Until one day it is definitely not fine and they are OUT OF LUCK...and in big trouble!

### Go to GETFOOD43.COM right now.

We just posted a free video presentation that exposes the truth. You can view it right now at GETFOOD43.COM. We have to warn you that you'll probably think what it shows is really disturbing. Because it sure seems like the American people are being kept in the dark about something that could threaten not only our way of life, but even our very lives. And that is just plain wrong.

Go to GETFOOD43.COM now and you'll also learn what is the #1 item to hoard in a crisis and why supplies of this critical item are so low in some places or even worse, completely gone – unavailable at any price.

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## REPUBLIC FORGE PATRIOT

### THERE ARE A NUMBER OF COMPANIES

on the market making—or claiming to make—custom 1911s. I contend most of them in fact put out hand-finished production models. They are fine pistols, but to me a true custom gun is one built to the specifications of the buyer, and this is what Republic Forge out of Texas does.

When you go onto the company's website there isn't a long list of models to choose from. Instead, you build your gun from the frame up—deciding on caliber, barrel length, grips and finish. Republic Forge prides itself on building its pistols in America, using only

American-made parts and American-made tools. In talking to them, I learned the last point was the hardest, as we have shipped so much of our manufacturing capability overseas.

Republic Forge offers 1911s from full size to compact, from 9mm to .45 ACP, with just about any color Cerakote finish you could ask for. For my review gun I decided to go for something unusual, and what I received didn't disappoint. The test gun I received is an all-steel Commander-size 1911 (the firm's Patriot) in .38 Super finished in burnt bronze Cerakote, with mammoth tusk ivory grips. The grips are off-white with rust-

### REPUBLIC FORGE PATRIOT

**TYPE:** 1911

**CALIBER:** .38 Super (as tested)

**CAPACITY:** 10+1

**BARREL LENGTH:** 4.25

**OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH:** 7.9/5.5/1.3 in.

**WEIGHT:** 37 oz.

**CONSTRUCTION:** steel frame and slide

**SIGHTS:** Novak 3-dot night

**TRIGGER:** long 3-hole; 3.5 lb. pull (measured)

**SAFETIES:** Caspian-style grip, ambidextrous thumb

**PRICE:** \$3,720 (as tested)

**MANUFACTURER:** Republic Forge,  
REPUBLICFORGE.COM

colored figuring that perfectly complements the bronze Cerakote finish.

When I saw my first Republic Forge 1911s at a trade show, several of them wore real mammoth ivory (tooth and tusk) grips. I didn't know such a thing was available, much less legal, and had to educate myself. Yes, it is legal, but as you might expect actual mammoth tooth and tusk grips are quite pricey because availability is limited and not likely to improve until we figure out the whole "Jurassic Park"/cloning dinosaurs thing. Mammoth tusk ivory grips will add \$850 to the cost of your pistol, mammoth tooth ivory \$1,200. I'm actually surprised it's so cheap, considering they're made from an extinct animal.

Talk about bragging rights at the range.

This pistol's rear and forward cocking serrations match, and the top of the slide is serrated. It is equipped with Wayne Novak no-snag three-dot night sights, with tritium inserts made by Trijicon.

Slide to frame fit was perfect; no play whatsoever, and yet the slide worked smoothly. The stainless Kart barrel locked up tight, and the front of the barrel was cut flat to the front of the match barrel bushing for an unusual look. While invisible to the eye, my fingers told me the last half inch or so of the barrel is enlarged slightly to provide for a perfect fit with the bushing.

The beavertail grip safety on the pistol is a Caspian style, which uses a Wilson frame cut. It is nicely fit to the frame, as is the ambidextrous thumb safety. The thumb safety gave me positive clicks up and down. The grips are held on by hex-head screws.

Both the mainspring housing and the front of the frame are machine checkered. The magazine well opening has been beveled too. The trigger is the standard, long three-hole type, and it and every other metal part on the gun other than the barrel, bushing and sights have been bronze Cerakoted. Republic Forge even includes a bush-

ing wrench identically Cerakoted so it won't mar your finish. Trigger pull on my sample measured a consistent 3.5 pounds.

The pistol is supplied with two 10-round Tripp Research Cobra magazines. These magazines are popular with competition shooters for their features and reliability but not as well known to the public as some other brands, and it shows me the people at Republic Forge know their stuff.

Why did I choose a 1911 in .38 Super? First, Republic Forge is located in Texas, and the .38 Super cartridge has always been most popular in the Southwest. Second, while the 9mm is more popular now and would provide the same magazine capacity, the 1911 is designed to be most reliable around a .45 ACP-length cartridge such as the .38 Super. Third, even with full power .38 Super defensive loads, an all-steel Commander-size 1911 is easy to control, and you've got 10+1 rounds in the gun to take care of business.

As I suspected, this pistol was more accurate than I am, and I know if I locked it into a Ransom Rest the groups would have been even smaller. Reliability was 100 percent.

Even with all the custom features no other custom 1911 maker offers (such as mammoth ivory grips) the Republic Forge 1911 was competitively priced. A base model 1911 from Republic Forge is \$2,795, and with the caliber and grip options my sample retails for \$3,720. ◎



▲ The base model Patriot comes with an ambi thumb and Caspian-style grip safeties. Tarr chose a bronze Cerakote option and mammoth tusk grips, creating a real head-turner.



▲ The Patriot's Kart barrel is cut flush to the front of the bushing for a unique look and is perfectly fitted. The gun sports a standard guide rod.

▲ The pistol ships with two 10-round Tripp Research Cobra magazines, which are popular with competition shooters but not as well known as some other brands.

## ACCURACY RESULTS | REPUBLIC FORCE PATRIOT

.38 Super +P	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
Wilson Combat XTP	124	1,289	15	1.7
Wilson Combat HAP	125	1,072	11	1.4
Winchester FMJ	130	1,198	23	1.9
American Eagle FMJ	130	1,141	16	2.0

**Notes:** Accuracy results are the averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured with an Oehler Model 35P 12 feet from the muzzle. Abbreviation: FMJ, full metal jacket



## WALTHER PPQ M2 .22

### VIRTUALLY EVERY WRITE-UP OF WALTHER'S

handguns begins with the obligatory James Bond reference, but I'll spare you because Bond's PPK shares little with the PPQ M2 beyond the brand name. The PPQ M2 .22 is, at least in terms of looks and dimensions, a doppelganger for the centerfire PPQs, so if you're familiar with the PPQ M2, you'll feel right at home behind the .22 version.

The grip surface is well textured and contoured to grab the hand and balance well, and the slide has the same beveled edges you'll find on the cen-

terfire M2 and the same black matte finish. The slide release button is long and easy to find, and the gun points as naturally as its big brother.

While the PPQ centerfire has a polymer frame with a CNC-machined steel slide, the .22's slide is made of aluminum alloy and therefore a few ounces lighter. The rimfire PPQ has a steel barrel threaded into a fixed block and a light mainspring that makes it very easy to operate the slide. And instead of the centerfire version's striker-fired trigger, the PPQ M2 .22 uses an internal hammer.

### WALTHER USA PPQ M2 .22

**TYPE:** blowback-operated semiauto  
**CALIBER:** .22 LR  
**CAPACITY:** 12+1  
**BARREL:** 4 in. (tested), 5 in.  
**OAL:** 7.1 in. (as tested)  
**WEIGHT:** 19 oz. (as tested)  
**CONSTRUCTION:** matte black aluminum slide; textured polymer grips  
**FINISH:** matte black  
**TRIGGER:** internal hammer fired; 5.2 lb. pull  
**SIGHTS:** metal rear, screw adjustable for windage and elevation; fixed polymer front  
**PRICE:** \$429 (as tested)  
**MANUFACTURER:** Walther Arms, [WALTHERARMS.COM](http://WALTHERARMS.COM)



There's an indentation at the rear of the slide that mimics the centerfire M2, but since it is an internal-hammer firearm there is no visible cocking indicator.

The M2 .22 does have a viewing window allowing you to see if there is a cartridge in the chamber. All of the M2s, including the .22 version, lack the paddle-style magazine release found on the original PPQ and feature a standard American-style button. I, for one, liked the paddle release, but I am in the minority. The PPQ M2 .22 comes with a tool allowing you to swap the button to the other side if you're a lefty.

The M2 .22 has a polymer blade front sight with a white dot and a metal rear sight with screws for elevation and windage adjustments. The slide has wide serrations front and rear for a solid grip, and the long slide-stop button is easy to locate. I like the slide-stop design on the PPQ much better than the small, hard-to-find button on the P22. It's also ambidextrous, which makes this a great gun for southpaws. The M2 .22 has no external manual safety, but it does have a firing pin block and trigger safeties.

If you're into mounting lasers, lights or anything else on your .22 the PPQ M2 .22 has a MIL-STD 1913 Picatinny rail. Basic takedown is fast and easy, so cleaning isn't a chore.

The lightweight polymer frame and aluminum slide make the M2 .22 easy to point and a joy to carry, and the textured grip is comfortable and provides



**A** The blowback-operated rimfire features a fixed barrel that is threaded into a block. A light mainspring makes it easy to operate the slide.

a secure hold on the gun. Trigger pull is rated at 4.85 pounds, but I found the pull to be just over five pounds with my Wheeler scale, a small but not insignificant difference. The bladed trigger offered a relatively smooth pull, and the resulting accuracy from 25 yards was good.

The accuracy figures on the accompanying chart might have improved with a more target-friendly rear sight, but few people will purchase the M2 .22 and shoot it all day from the bench.

The one supplied magazine provided holds 12 rounds and has a thumb assist to aid in loading. I did find if you load only a few rounds and release the spring, the top cartridge jams in the lips of the magazine and points the nose of the bullet at just such an angle you may or may not have a stovepipe jam when you release the slide. The problem disappeared when I took the

time to slowly release the spring in the magazine.

The version I tested had a four-inch barrel, but there is also a version with a five-inch pipe available as well. For the stubby version, I thought accuracy was good.

The M2 .22 may have the look and feel of the centerfire PPQ M2, but in reality it is its own gun. And while it may always be associated with a certain MI6 agent, the PPQ M2 .22's real claim to fame is it blends traditional mechanical design with modern material and machining technology to produce a pistol that is at once modern and classic. Now that Walther has established Walther USA in Fort Smith, Arkansas, the company is now controlling its own destiny on this side of the Atlantic, and if the M2 .22 is any indication, the future is promising. ◎



**A** Walther's paddle-style mag release has been cashiered on the PPQ M2 series in favor of a button style, and the slide lock lever is super easy to find.



**A** The stylishly contoured slide features grasping grooves and the Walther logo, and the frame sports an accessory rail.

## ACCURACY RESULTS | WALTHER PPQ M2 .22

.22 Long Rifle	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
Lapua Center-X	40	860	8.2	1.79
Lapua Midas +	40	874	9.4	1.93
Federal Target	40	890	15.9	2.09
Remington Viper Hyper-Velocity	36	1,036	17.1	2.53
Winchester Super-X T22 Target	40	914	18.9	2.88

**Notes:** Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups at 25 yards from a fixed rest. Velocity figures are 10-shot averages recorded on a ProChrono digital chronograph placed 10 feet from the muzzle.



## COLT MUSTANG XSP

### 1908 WITNESSED THE INTRODUCTION

of the .380 Automatic Colt Pistol cartridge and the Colt Model Pocket Pistol, both of which were designs of legendary John M. Browning. In 1983 Colt re-visited the .380 Auto with its Government model Series 80 until it was discontinued in 1993. Several versions of the Government model, Mustang and Pony—all chambering the .380—have come and gone, but as history tends to recycle almost everything, Colt once again offers two versions of its time-tested Mustang Pocketlite in the venerable .380 Auto.

The newest in the lineup, the Colt XSP, offers a polymer frame for a slightly lighter pistol with a 0.7-ounce difference in weight over the traditional Mustang and provides an ambidextrous safety and accessory rail. The slide is finished in black DLC—Diamond-like Carbon—and the safety, magazine release, slide release and hammer are finished in brushed nickel. The contrasting combination makes for nice aesthetics as well as quick visual identification of the controls.

The Colt Mustang is a single-ac-

### COLT MUSTANG XSP

**TYPE:** Series 80 single-action semiauto  
**CALIBER:** .380 Auto  
**CAPACITY:** 6+1  
**BARREL:** 2.75 in.  
**OAL:** 5.5  
**WEIGHT:** 11.8 oz.  
**CONSTRUCTION:** black DLC-finished steel slide, polymer frame, electroless nickel-finished controls  
**SIGHTS:** non-adjustable high profile  
**TRIGGER:** single- action; 7 lb. pull  
**SAFETY:** ambidextrous thumb  
**PRICE:** \$672  
**MANUFACTURER:** Colt Manufacturing, colt.com

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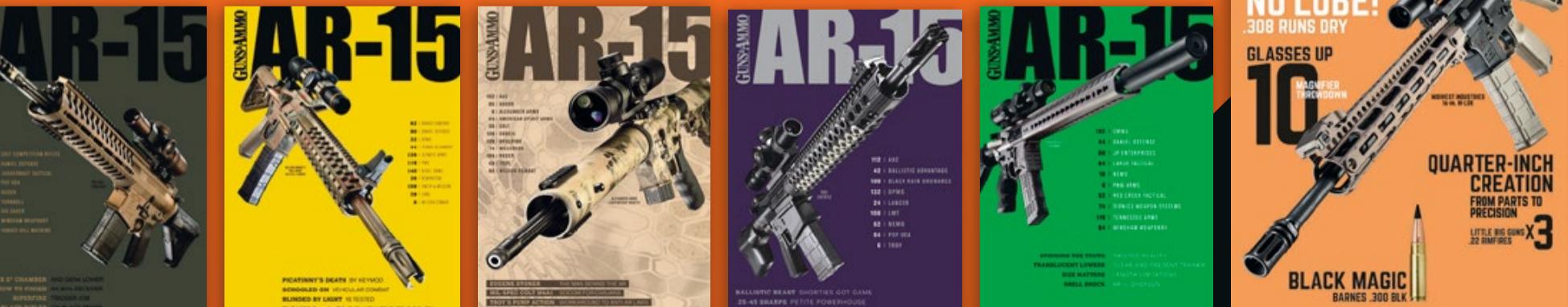


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## HANDGUNS | FIRING LINE REPORT | COLT MUSTANG XSP

tion-only design, and it's small—about the size of your hand. The XSP version weighs only 13.85 ounces fully loaded. The sights are a plain combat style, ideally suited for close ranges.

The pistol's fairly smooth and snag-free design works well in a holster or for pocket carry. Both my wife and I carried it in an inside-the-pocket holster, and it's so light and compact



▲ The controls are finished in electroless nickel, which contrasts nicely with the black DLC-coated slide and polymer frame.



▲ Its diminutive size made it popular with younger shooters and smaller adults, and despite the short grip it proved controllable.

it was almost easy to forget you had it with you. As such, this gun would be ideal for either backup carry or primary carry in hot weather.

I found the Colt XSP to be popular with younger shooters and adults with smaller hands. Most women who shot the Colt XSP said they could see it as a primary carry gun in either a purse or a holster.

The extra six-round magazine weighs 2.85 ounces loaded; it's only the size of a disposable lighter and easy to carry. So we're talking a total combined weight of just under a pound for gun and loaded spare mag.

If you're accustomed to shooting full-size handguns, you'll likely have to experiment a bit to find a shooting grip on the Mustang XSP that works for you. I found wrapping my hand



▲ The XSP features an ambidextrous thumb safety, and together with a loaded spare magazine you're looking at a small, light carry gun for holster or pocket.

### ACCURACY RESULTS | COLT MUSTANG XSP

.380 ACP	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
Liberty Ammunition JHP	50	1,358	21	3.7
Hornady Critical Defense FTX	90	900	7	3.2
Winchester Range/Practice FMJ	95	885	14	3.7
Federal American Eagle FMJ	95	858	13	3.8
Winchester PDX1 Defender JHP	95	925	21	3.9

**Notes:** Accuracy results are averages of five five-shot groups shot from a Caldwell Matrix rest at 15 yards. Velocities figures are 10-shot averages recorded on a CED M2 chronograph placed 12 feet from the muzzle. Abbreviations: FMJ, full metal jacket; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint

around the XSP with my pinky finger resting under the magazine's floor plate worked well for me.

Whether I used a one- or two-handed grip, I found it easy to get center-mass hits on targets out to seven yards. Despite its size the XSP is controllable, and shooting a box or two of defensive ammo is a pleasant experience.

Field stripping is much like a 1911 except there is no barrel bushing or pivoting barrel link to play with. The barrel pivots on a fixed link, so reassembly is fast and easy, and cleaning is simple as can be and actually enjoyable.

I found the Colt XSP to be 100 percent reliable, and while there are smaller handguns, this is as small as I feel you can safely go and still retain reliability. So whether you're looking for a pistol to throw in your pocket for a quick run to the corner store or something for everyday carry, the Colt name carries almost two centuries of firearms experience behind it, so you can rest easy. ◎



▲ The high-profile combat-style sights proved easy to see and hit with. The XSP, like its other Mustang stablemate, features a Commander-style hammer.

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# PLAYING KEEP-AWAY

## HOW TO DEFEND AGAINST AN ATTACKER'S POTENTIAL GUN GRAB.

### THE FBI JUST PUBLISHED THE "LAW

Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted" report for 2013. Gunfire was the cause of death for 26 of the 27 officers feloniously killed. Eighteen were killed by handguns, and half of those were within five feet of their offenders. In the 10-year period between 2004 and 2013, 18 officers were killed with their own guns.

These statistics justify the need for an officer—and the legally armed citizen—to be proficient at both shooting and fighting. Within five feet, your ability to fight with your handgun is likely to bear more on the outcome of the encounter than your marksmanship. During a deadly force encounter within arm's length, handgun retention is critical because the assailant is close enough to disarm you.

Despite these sobering statistics, some of my fellow officers cling to a "I'll just shoot him" mentality when the topic of handgun retention is addressed. Although shooting an assailant who attempts to disarm you is an option, it's far from foolproof.

When your adversary grabs hold of your handgun, who's to say he won't redirect muzzle away from his body? In such a case, firing the handgun not only fails to produce a fight-stopping hit on the foe, but also could result in a round hitting an innocent third party.

Even if you were able to shoot the assailant, there's no guarantee one round would immediately incapacitate him, yet with the assailant's hands preventing the slide of your pistol from reciprocating, one shot is probably all you'll get before the pistol is rendered tem-

porarily inoperable. (Similarly, it doesn't take much pressure around a revolver's cylinder to prevent it from rotating.) As such, your handgun retention repertoire needs to consist of more than simply pressing the trigger.

Of course, your best bet is to keep your gun out of the assailant's reach by way of footwork, bringing the gun closer to your body in what's known as a retention shooting position, or a combination thereof. But, despite

ant, after driving the muzzle toward him immediately pull the gun away while taking a shuffle step backward.

Rotating the gun inward (counterclockwise for a right-handed shooter) while pulling the gun toward you will tend to compromise the assailant's grip. And if you're lucky, the front sight will tear the flesh of his hand.

If you're not able to fully extract your gun from the bad guy's hands on

### If you're not able to fully extract your gun from the bad guy's hands on the first try, don't panic.

your best efforts, an assailant may grab hold of your pistol. When this occurs, you've got to have a viable default response.

One of the simplest handgun retention techniques I was taught in the police academy involves driving the muzzle toward the assailant then immediately pulling the gun back. This push/pull action works because the bad guy reflexively resists being struck with the muzzle by pushing it away and then when you immediately pulling the gun back toward you you're using his own energy against him.

But in order to maximize the effectiveness of this technique, you'll need to incorporate footwork. As soon as your gun is grabbed, take a lunging step forward and try to strike the assailant with the muzzle. While this strike is unlikely to be a fight-stopper, it can definitely serve as a distraction. Whether or not the muzzle of your gun hits the assail-

the first try, don't panic. Subsequent attempts are likely be more effective because the dynamic push/pull action is likely to result in ever more separation between you and the assailant. You're more likely to win this potentially deadly tug-of-war because you're gripping the handgun in the way it's designed to be held.

After wrenching your gun free, your goal is to create distance. Remember, since your pistol has likely malfunctioned, you'll probably need to tap the magazine and rack the slide before it will fire. And, of course, your decision to fire will be based on your assessment of the situation.

If you own a handgun for personal defense, it's incumbent upon you to ensure it doesn't fall into the wrong hands. Buy an inert training gun, enlist a willing partner and get in some practice. Should you find yourself fighting for your gun, you'll be glad you did.

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